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REQUESTS FOR CLARIFICATION
IN CONVERSATION BETWEEN
JAPANESE AND NON-JAPANESE

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SYMBOLS USED IN THE EXAMPLES

.	a brief pause
..	a noticeable but not unnatural pause
....	a longer pause, which may imply a communication problem
-	lengthening of the preceding syllable
--	greatly lengthened syllable
△	stressed and high-pitched sounds
()	unclear or inaudible utterance
[]	unclear feedback, or paralinguistic sounds produced by the listener
<u>xxx</u>	an utterance in a low voice
<u>xxx</u>	an utterance made with laughter
<u>xxx</u>	slow speech
ˆ	rising terminal intonation
˘	falling terminal intonation
¯	sustained terminal intonation
ˆ	prominent high pitch

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Communication problems and correction

Communication problems of various kinds are inherent in conversation (Neustupný 1973, 1976, 1978a, 1979a, 1985; Jefferson 1972; Schegloff, Jefferson and Sacks 1977; Shimanoff and Brunak 1977; Jernudd and Thuan 1980, 1983). Due to the nature of language and communication, it is not always possible to express what we wish to convey and to understand what is said to us. In addition to restrictions imposed by the language system and psychological factors (e.g. memory span, distraction, fatigue, nervousness, etc.), socio-cultural rules of language use cause communication problems.

Hymes (1974:53-62) points out that an act of speaking is constrained by a bundle of some 16-17 speech act components, such as message form, message content, setting, scene, etc. As speakers, when we have a message to be conveyed, an appropriate channel and message form must be selected. In the case of a message to be conveyed by telephone, for instance, we must decide what time we should ring and where (the receiver's workplace, private home, etc.) Once we establish contact with the receiver, we are required to observe various particular routines of telephone conversation (Schegloff 1968) as well as various general rules of conversational interaction: initiation and termination, topic nomination, development and change, turn-taking, etc. (Schegloff and Sacks 1973; Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson 1974). Each utterance must make sense in relation to the preceding discourse and the listener's knowledge of the world. We must know how to promise, invite, apologise, persuade, command, etc. (Austin 1962; Searle 1976). In general we are expected to observe what is called the 'cooperative principle' (Grice:1975). An appropriate politeness level must be selected and maintained (or shifted, if necessary) during a conversation. We should even know how to ask a question which we know the listener does not wish to answer.

As hearers, we must process sounds, understand propositional meaning, and arrive at a reasonable interpretation of the speaker's intentions and motivation (Foss and Hakes 1978; Slobin 1979).

These requirements are so formidable that even native speakers, who have acquired grammatical competence, occasionally have difficulty in communicating with other native speakers of the language. Therefore, the fact that people can and do communicate cannot be explained unless we assume that native speakers have acquired, to a greater or lesser extent, the manipulative ability to cope with communication problems, and that they exercise these skills in order to prevent or handle communication breakdown.

Neustupný (1973, 1979a, 1985) explicitly distinguishes between the generative and corrective sides of communicative competence. He argues that aside from rules of language-use there is a set of rules of linguistic correction. These rules 'cover a wide range of behaviour including Labov's hypercorrection ... speaker's correction of his lexical selection, repetition, request for clarification, etc.', and that the 'feature which characterises all these types of behaviour is the presence of a 'language problem'.' (1978a:243-244). He goes on to say that generative linguistic and sociolinguistic rules are frequently violated, and that once they are violated we can attempt to correct the inadequacy, if we so desire; he regards this ability as corrective competence. Much is still unknown about corrective competence, but this does not invalidate the concept as such. It is indisputable that we possess the ability to cope with such problems.

Neustupný, who has developed the theory of correction over the years (1973, 1976, 1981 and 1985), distinguishes three stages of correction processes: apprehension, evaluation and corrective adjustment. He argues that deviations from grammatical rules and socio-cultural norms may or may not be noticed (apprehended), and deviations apprehended by either or both of the communicants are marked as violations. Violations may then be evaluated either positively or negatively. Violations which are given negative evaluation are regarded as inadequate, and this in turn may trigger corrective adjustment. These correction processes, illustrated below, are psychological, and may not always be consciously cognised. However, the fact that various corrective acts are observed in human communication cannot be satisfactorily accounted for without postulating such processes, and there is evidence to suggest that these processes actually do occur (Ozaki 1981; Neustupný 1983, 1985; Masumi-So 1983).

Correction processes

Apprehension stage

Evaluation stage

Corrective adjustment stage

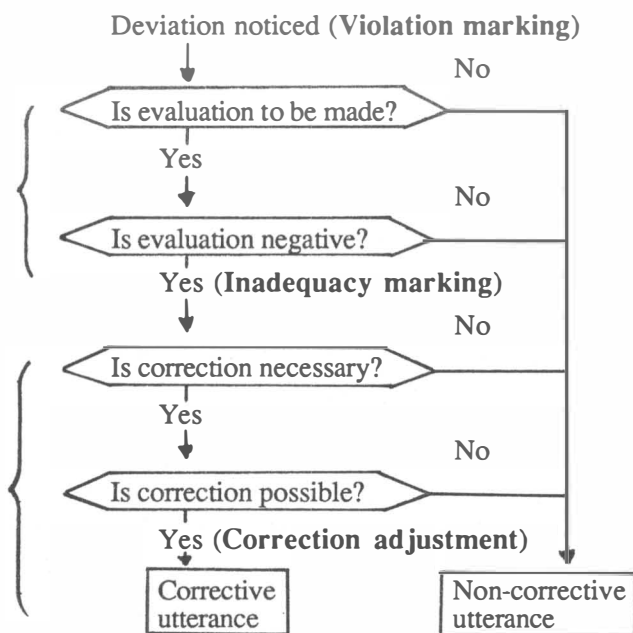


Figure 1

1.2 Contact situations and correction

Communication problems are much more salient in 'contact' (intercultural) situations where native and non-native speakers interact. In these situations the shared rules of language and language use tend to be too restricted to allow a smooth flow of conversation (Neustupný 1981, 1985). One of the most important characteristics of contact situations is the quantity and variety of correction processes found in them.

It has been widely accepted that native speakers in contact situations commonly employ a simplified register called 'foreigner talk' (Ferguson 1971, 1981; Hatch, Shapira and Gough 1978; Hatch 1978; Larsen-Freeman 1980; Clyne 1981; Freed 1981; Long 1981, 1983). Freed (1981), for instance, has reported that native speakers in her samples used shorter sentences much more frequently to non-native speakers than to native speakers. In her corpus the average sentence directed to foreign speakers of lower levels of proficiency contained 6.74 words while the average sentence addressed to advanced foreign speakers contained 9.66 words. In an average sentence in native-native situations the same speakers used 12.12 words. Freed also found that simple sentences which contain only one main verb are considerably more frequent in foreigner talk discourse: 71 percent of well-formed sentences directed to beginners and 55 percent to advanced foreign speakers are simple sentences, whereas only 41 percent in native-native conversations are sentences of this type (1981:26). Long (1981) reports that 96 percent of all topic-initiating moves in foreigner talk discourse take the form of a question compared with 62 percent in native-native discourse; he suggests that this high frequency is motivated by a tendency to lighten the burden of non-native speakers (1981:146). Native speakers change *wh*-questions to *yes/no* or choice questions in response to signals from foreign interlocutors that *wh*-questions have not been understood (Hatch, Shapira and Gough 1978). Despite their attempts to get a given message across, they may be obliged to use a strategy of message abandonment, or they may be forced to avoid certain topics in fear of communication breakdown.

There is no comparable study of foreigner talk in Japanese. However, the preliminary report by Skoutarides (1981) notes that Japanese native speakers tend to use simple sentences, repeat key words, initiate lexical correction and use English words. They use first person pronouns in contexts where they do not normally appear in native-native conversation.

It is evident from all these findings that native speakers in contact situations adjust their language to maintain conversation with non-native speakers. Foreigner talk can be regarded as an attempt by native speakers to correct communication problems: its aim is to prevent such problems occurring or to overcome them once they occur.

The non-native speaker, too, employs various correction strategies to cope with communication problems. In general terms there are two courses of action open to him to solve production problems: one is to reduce his communicative goals, that is to adjust the message to the resources available to him (message adjustment strategies), and the other is to expand his resources so as to attain the goals desired (resource expansion strategies) (Corder 1978). Topic avoidance, message abandonment, and message reduction fall under message adjustment strategies. Borrowing, switching, word coinage, paraphrase, circumlocution, appeal for assistance, or the use of gestures are strategies aimed at expanding the speaker's resources in order to transcend gaps in his

communicative competence. The study of the non-native speaker's strategies in contact situations developed in the 1970s under the heading of 'communication strategies', and a sizeable amount of data has been accumulated.¹ However, as we shall point out in the following section, research into strategies for solving comprehension problems has been largely neglected.

1.3 Correction strategies and communication strategies

The term 'communication strategies' is frequently used in the literature relating to interlanguage studies including foreign language pedagogy (Brown 1980). However, the term has not always been used appropriately, and terminological confusion has arisen. In this section I shall examine various definitions that have been proposed, and present a new definition.

Selinker (1972) is often cited as the scholar who first used the term 'communication strategy'. He mentions that Serbo-Croatian speakers of English often use *he* where *she* is correct although their native language distinguished the two third pronouns in the same way as English does. The notion of communication strategy partly accounts for this phenomenon: the learner feels that the distinction is not crucial in communication and use *he* for both *he* and *she* to facilitate production and smoother communication. Although Selinker does not give an explicit definition of the term, he has directed attention to the fact that foreign speakers employ strategies for communication.² Váradi (1973) examines how learners overcome the gap between what they wish to convey and what their interlanguage (Selinker 1972) allows them to express. Tarone, Frauenfelder and Selinker (1976) employ the term 'production strategy' instead of 'communication strategy' and define it as:

- (1) a *systematic* attempt by the learner to *express meaning* in the target language, in situations where the appropriate systematic target language rules have not been formed. (Faerch and Kasper (eds) 1983:4) [Italics added].

Tarone, Cohen and Dumas (1976) expand this definition to include strategies used by the listener for comprehension problems. They thus define the term 'communication strategy' as:

- (2) a *systematic* attempt by the learner to *express or decode meaning* in the target language, in situations where the appropriate systematic target language rules have not been formed. (Faerch and Kasper (eds) 1983:5) [Italics added].

Tarone (1977) modifies the above definition as follows:

- (3) In essence, then, *conscious* communication strategies are used by an individual to overcome the crisis which occurs when language structures are inadequate to *convey the individual's thought* (1977:195) [Italics added].

In 1980 Tarone reviews these definitions and drops the two key words 'systematic' and 'conscious' in a new formulation which emphasises the interactional function of communication strategies.

- (4) a *mutual attempt* of two interlocutors to *agree on a meaning* in a situation where requisite meaning structures do not seem to be shared (Meaning structures include both linguistic and sociolinguistic structures.) (1980:419) [Italics added].

This definition is markedly different from the earlier ones in that it explicitly encompasses the interactional phase of communication. However, Faerch and Kasper (1984) convincingly argue that since some types of strategies are not necessarily interactional, Tarone's formulation is too narrow.

Faerch and Kasper (1980) propose a much wider definition on the basis of a psycholinguistic model of speech production. They single out two criteria: problem-orientedness as primary, and consciousness as secondary, and define the communication strategies as follows:

(5) ... *a strategy is potentially conscious plan for solving what to the individual presents itself as a problem in reaching a particular goal.* (Faerch and Kasper 1980:60).

This definition, unlike (1) – (4), does not specify what is meant by a 'problem', and thus covers all types of strategies in all kinds of situations.

All these definitions differ in some aspects, but they share a common feature: what they call 'communication strategies' are regarded as techniques to solve communication problems which are caused by a gap between the interlocutors' communicative competence.

Another wider view of communication strategies is expressed by Canale (1983), who distinguishes four areas of competence under the heading of communicative competence: grammatical, sociolinguistic, discourse and strategic competence. He explains what is meant by strategic competence as follows:

(6) This component is composed of mastery of verbal and nonverbal communication strategies that may be called into action for two main reasons: (a) to compensate for breakdowns in communication due to limiting conditions in actual communication (e.g. momentary inability to recall an idea or grammatical form) or to insufficient competence in one or more of the other areas of communicative competence; and (b) to enhance the effectiveness of communication (e.g. deliberately slow and soft speech for rhetorical effect). (1983: 10-11).

It is significant that this definition includes two fundamentally different types of strategies: one for solving communication problems and the other for effective communication.

Communication strategies under definitions (1) – (5) are all regarded as 'compensatory' in Canale's sense, since they are defined as being used for coping with communication problems, whereas Canale's own definition (6) includes both 'compensatory' as well as 'enhancement' strategies. In order to sort out this terminological confusion I propose to introduce the concept of correction. Correction in Neustupný's sense takes place when a participant realises that a communication rule is violated or is going to be violated; thus, correction is a compensatory attempt. On this ground I shall call compensatory strategies 'correction strategies', and define the term as follows:

A correction strategy is a method used by participants, as speaker/hearers, to handle problems of encoding intentions and decoding communicative behaviour in an attempt to construct interactional discourse. 'Problems' are taken to refer to communicative rule violations.

According to this definition most studies previously carried out under the heading of communication strategies are in fact studies of correction strategies.

This definition explicitly includes strategies used by listeners for coping with comprehension problems. Thus, clarification requests such as 'Huh?', 'What?' and 'Sorry, what do you mean?' are used as correction strategies for such problems. A clarification request is the counterpart of an appeal for assistance in solving production problems.

The above definition also encompasses native speakers' strategies. Their correction strategies are, for obvious reasons, more frequently employed in intercultural communication. This new definition leads us to look at strategies for solving comprehension problems from both native and non-native speakers point of view.

It should be mentioned that non-native speakers use strategies to enhance communication as well. In Ozaki (1981) I have reported that an advanced learner of Japanese lowered her volume to show reservation and that another learner imitated the pronunciation of the native interlocutor. Neustupný (1983) establishes that non-native speakers attempt to avoid using Japanese honorifics to create friendly relations with native speakers. All these phenomena suggest that non-native speakers, particularly at an advanced level, use both correction strategies and enhancement strategies.

In addition to these sub-types of communication strategies, there are other types, such as production strategies. Tarone (1981) defines a production strategy as 'an attempt to use one's linguistic system efficiently and clearly, with a minimum of effort' (1981:289). She suggests that the use of prefabricated patterns, discourse planning and rehearsal would be examples of production strategies (*ibid*). Similarly, Tarone also argues that the listener uses strategies in an attempt to 'interpret incoming utterances efficiently, with the least effort' (1981:291). It may be possible to combine these strategy types under a single label 'processing strategies'. This strategy type is used not to solve any particular problem but to facilitate the smooth and quick processing of production and comprehension.

I have proposed that 'communication strategy' is a cover term under which at least three distinct strategy types are subsumed:

Communication strategies

- **Correction strategies** are used to cope with various communication problems.
- **Enhancement strategies** are used to produce a better communicative effect upon the interlocutor.
- **Processing strategies** are used to process production and comprehension with the minimum of effort.

Some of the correction strategies are interactional in the sense that they require responses from the listener (e.g. 'How do you say 'equal' in Japanese?'; 'Would you say that again, please?'); none of the processing strategies are interactional in this sense. Enhancement strategies are assumed to be used primarily to produce desirable interpersonal relationships between the speakers. In contrast, the overt use of correction strategies (i.e. correction after an error was

made) seems to be employed primarily for propositional errors rather than interpersonal mistakes. Thus, the following question addressed by a beginning learner of Japanese to a native speaker sounds very awkward. Word replacement directed to misuse of an honorific form is less likely to occur in native-native conversation.

Meruborunwa itsu kimashita irasshaimashita ka?
 Melbourne when came came (polite) question
 When did you come, come (polite) to Melbourne?

The above list of strategy types is by no means exhaustive, and further empirical work is needed to develop a comprehensive list. It is sufficient for the present to reiterate that we reject the narrow definition of communication strategy (definitions 1 – 5) and replace it with the term 'correction strategy'.

1.4 Correction strategies and foreign language teaching

Any foreign language course aims at enabling learners to acquire the ability to communicate with native speakers of the target language, and general-purpose courses, explicitly or implicitly, claim that one of their aims is to teach conversational skills. **Communicative competence** (Hymes 1972; cf. also Halliday 1973) has been a vogue term in the foreign language teaching literature over the last fifteen years.

However, the business of most language teaching is still conducted in a traditional teacher-centred classroom setting in which anomalous dialogue takes place. The teacher often asks questions to which he well knows the answers; and students also realise this. The focus of their attention thus is not on what is said but on how it is said. In addition, questions are frequently asked in class which are seldom asked in real communicative situations. So-called 'classroom conversation' tends to be conducted in a social vacuum, focus being placed on message forms.

Knowledge of grammar (pronunciation, syntax and vocabulary) is an indispensable component of communicative competence, and formal language teaching in the classroom setting helps learners consciously learn grammatical rules. However, it has been widely argued that formal instruction in the classroom does not necessarily improve performance in real communication. Many language teachers feel frustrated to find that those who perform very well in class turn out to be miserable performers outside the classroom. In an attempt to see if formal teaching affects learner interlanguage, Schumann (1978) taught English negation to a 33 year-old Spanish speaking subject for seven months and obtained the following results:

	Correct use of negatives	
	Before experiment	After experiment
Spontaneous situations	22%	20%
Formal test situations	10%	64%

On the basis of this finding, Schumann concludes that:

...instruction has radically improved his performance in an artificial, highly monitored elicitation task, but that it had virtually no effect on his spontaneous speech which he uses in normal communication with native speakers of English. (1978:268).

Also relevant here is the 'Monitor Theory' proposed by Krashen (1976, 1977a, 1977b, 1981). Krashen argues that second language ability develops through two different systems: subconscious acquisition and conscious learning. He says:

The fundamental claim of Monitor Theory is that conscious learning is available to the performer only as a Monitor. In general, utterances are initiated by the acquired system - our fluency in production is based on what we have "picked up" through active communication. Our "formal" knowledge of the second language, our conscious learning, may be used to alter the output of the acquired system, sometimes before and sometimes after the utterance is produced. (1981:2).

According to this hypothesis, subconscious acquisition through communicative interaction facilitates fluency, while conscious learning improves formal accuracy. It is now widely accepted by applied linguists and foreign language teachers that learners need to be given more opportunities to acquire rather than learn the target language.

Proponents of the communicative approach to language teaching urge that language teachers should develop teaching techniques and exercises which enable learners to engage in genuine communication, through which they can acquire communicative competence (Van Ek 1975; Wilkins 1976; Joiner and Westphal (eds) 1978; Widdowson 1978; Brumfit and Johnson (eds) 1979; Candlin (ed) 1981; Littlewood 1981; Johnson and Morrow (eds) 1981; Johnson 1982; and others). However, in the foreign language teaching profession the term 'communicative competence' is often equated with the creative use of grammatical competence and fluency in conversation (Savignon 1971; Rivers 1972), and other important aspects of the concept tend to be overlooked.

When the term was first coined by Hymes in opposition to Chomsky's narrower definition of 'competence', it referred to the ability to produce appropriate utterances in a given context of situation. Hymes argued that 'there are rules of use without which the rules of grammar would be useless' (1972:278). Foreign speakers at times sound awkward and even rude to native speakers not simply because they utter ungrammatical sentences but because they speak when they are not expected to speak, about what is out of place, in a manner which is unacceptable in the target speech community (Neustupný 1982). Communicative competence refers to the knowledge of rules and the ability to produce both grammatical and appropriate utterances. Since appropriacy overrides grammaticality, native speakers produce ungrammatical utterances if they are appropriate (e.g. foreigner talk).

We have seen that, in addition to the generative side of communicative competence, there is a corrective side as well (1.1). The competent language user is capable of dealing with communication problems in an appropriate manner. Native speakers, for instance, occasionally face a comprehension problem, but adult native speakers of Japanese know how to initiate the

correction process and are able to choose an appropriate expression to ask for clarification in a given situation. However, foreign speakers, particularly at lower levels of proficiency, often keep silent or simply smile, not knowing how to deal with their comprehension problems.

A competent conversationalist is a speaker who can produce appropriate utterances fluently and understand speakers' intentions in the light of information obtained from the linguistic context and the non-linguistic situation, and who knows when, how, and what to correct in conversation. If foreign language teaching aims to produce such a speaker/hearer, it should include at least the following three components:

- (1) grammatical rules (pronunciation, vocabulary and syntax)
- (2) sociocultural rules
- (3) corrective rules

Sociolinguists have been working to discover the 'syntax of conversation' in everyday life. Journals on language pedagogy contain a number of articles reporting new experiments and teaching techniques to develop conversational competence. Foreign language textbooks, particularly for learners of English as a foreign/second language, are now available on the market which claim that they are designed for teaching communication rather than grammar. Despite these concerted efforts, our knowledge of communicative competence is still limited and does not lend itself to systematic presentation in the classroom. If we take 'teaching' to mean an organised attempt involving planning (analysis of needs, selection of items to be taught and grading of items), implementation of the plan, and assessment, we must admit that teaching conversation is an extremely formidable task.

Under these circumstances our role as language teachers must be to provide students with opportunities to interact with native speakers of the target language, through which, it is hoped, they will acquire conversational ability. If we accept this position, we have to equip our students with correction strategies which will help them to overcome communication problems and utilise conversation with native speakers to its full extent. Although much is still unknown about correction strategies, we have argued that they should be incorporated into the foreign language teaching syllabus so that learners are better prepared for interaction with native speakers.

1.5 Conceptual framework and scope of this study

As indicated above (1.3), the study of interlanguage correction strategies has been largely limited to the area of production. Tarone presents a brief review of existing studies of strategies and states:

But, overall, it is fair to say that most effort in this area has been devoted to identifying and categorising the various types of CS [communication strategies: AO] used by *learners* when they attempt to transcend gaps in their IL systems in *getting across an intended meaning*. (1980:420) (*Italics added*).

Although some scholars (Corder, 1978; Tarone, Cohen and Dumas, 1976; Faerch and Kasper, 1980) share the view that the notion of communication strategies (or correction strategies, in our

terms) includes strategies for solving decoding problems, there have been very few empirical studies of such strategies used by non-native speakers in contact situations (cf. Varonis and Gass, 1985).³ The present study attempts to fill this gap, focusing on learners' correction strategies for solving comprehension problems and on native speakers' correction strategies for helping foreign interlocutors. In the remainder of this chapter I shall present a conceptual framework for correction strategies for comprehension problems as a preliminary to subsequent chapters.

A listener employs various processing strategies to arrive at a reasonable interpretation of an utterance (Slobin 1979:43-61). Nevertheless, comprehension problems may result in the communicative goal not being attained. In an attempt to solve comprehension problems the listener may ask the speaker to repeat the 'trouble spot' of the utterance, or to give some additional information about it, or to confirm whether his interpretation of the utterance is correct or not. These are all attempts to reach the communicative goal. These achievement strategies are in this study called **Requests for Clarification (RC)**.

As well as achievement strategies, the listener faced with a comprehension problem may instead choose an avoidance strategy (cf. Corder 1978; Faerch and Kasper 1980)⁴. It seems intuitively correct to assume that the listener often consciously avoids using an RC in face-to-face conversation. He may be satisfied with his imperfect comprehension, believing that it does not seriously impair communication, or he may avoid an RC in fear of violating other communicative rules (e.g. politeness rules). This avoidance strategy, which changes the communicative goal, is referred to as **RC Avoidance** in this study.

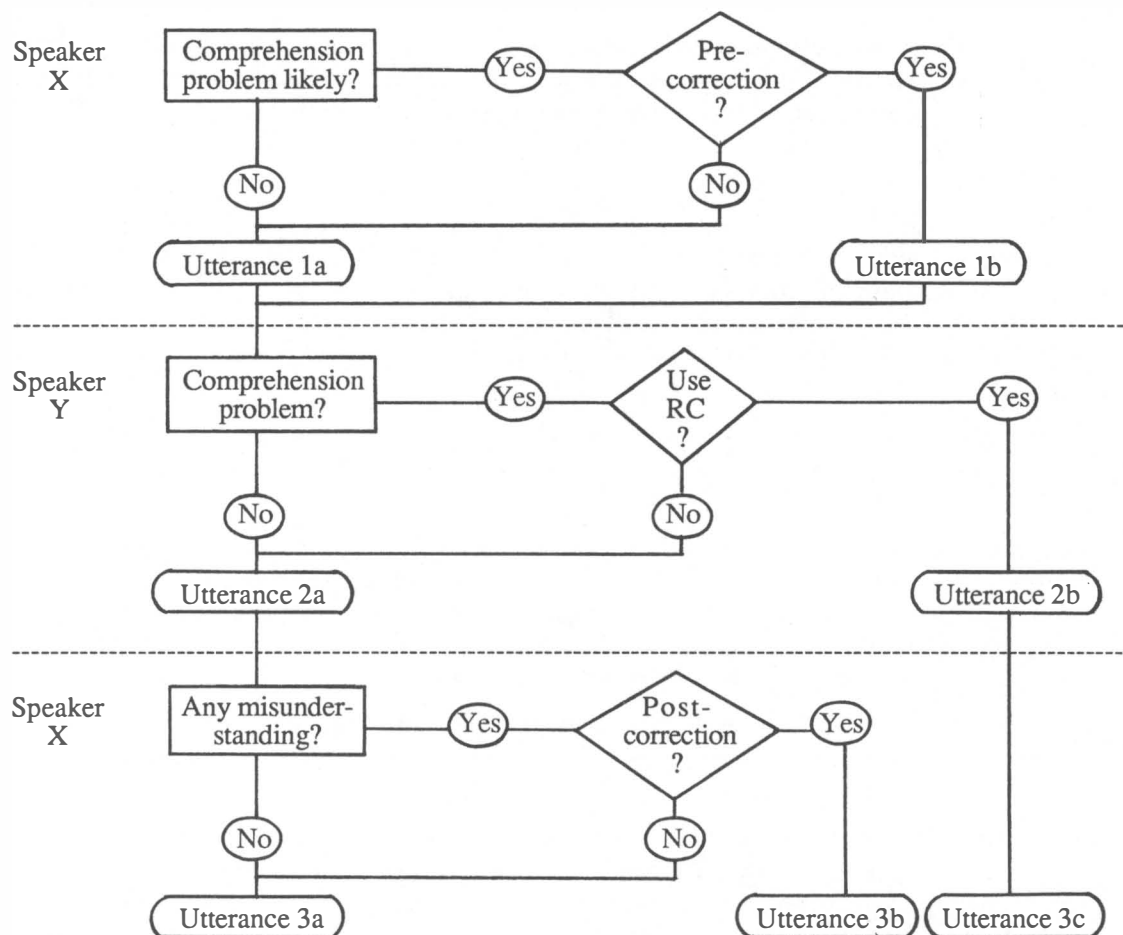
It is important to note that in principle comprehension problems are not limited to the listener. The speaker may correct his utterance before articulation in order to prevent a comprehension problem from arising. This pre-correction is not uncommon in conversation.⁵ A specialist in agriculture may carefully avoid using highly technical terms in talking with farmers to facilitate communication. A speaker may consciously avoid using words and expressions which he regards as difficult to understand for a listener of a different dialect. Correction phenomena of both types seem to be much more frequent when the speaker regards his interlocutor as a less competent speaker of the language. Thus, foreigner talk discourse often provides instances of native speakers' pre- and in-correction aimed at helping foreign interlocutors' understanding.

Apart from pre-correction for possible comprehension problems, the speaker may pause noticeably longer than usual after producing an utterance in order to check, or he may even explicitly ask, whether or not his utterance has been understood. When an RC is issued by the listener, the speaker of the trouble spot is obliged to clarify his original utterance. This can be seen as a forced post-correction.

It also happens that the speaker realises that his utterance has been misunderstood by the listener and faces a problem of whether and how he should correct misunderstanding on the part of the listener. These various phenomena relating to comprehension problems are brought together in Figure 2.

In terms of this figure, foreigner talk study focusses on the analysis of utterance 1b in relation to the correction-free utterance 1a in order to characterise the simplified register, and aims at gaining understanding of the communicative role of foreigner talk and its nature as input to foreign

language learning. Requests for clarification (utterance 2b) and its avoidance are the major foci of this study. Analysis of RC and RC avoidance strategies used by non-native speakers in their interlanguage communication will reveal how they cope with comprehension problems. The success or failure of RCs can be partly judged from utterance 3c, which RCs elicit from native speakers. This study examines the relationship between utterances 2b and 3c; furthermore, comparison of utterances 1a and 3c will enable us to discover how native speakers deal with comprehension problems on the part of non-native interlocutors. This is an interactional approach to foreigner talk study.



Utterance 1b: a result of pre-correction by the speaker to prevent communication breakdown.

Utterance 2b: an RC, that is, an initiation of a post-correction.

Utterance 3b: post-correction prompted by misunderstanding by the other speaker.

Utterance 3c: post-correction initiated by the RC.

Figure 2: Comprehension problems and strategies

This study consists of eight chapters. Following this introductory chapter, the data base and methodology will be described in Chapter 2. In Chapter 3, I shall identify and classify various types of RCs in the corpus. Chapter 4 analyses RCs used by native speakers of Japanese in intra-cultural communication. In Chapter 5 strategies used by non-native speakers of Japanese in contact situations are compared with the findings reported in Chapter 4 concerning native speakers' correction strategies. Proficiency levels of foreign speakers and their use of RCs are also examined. Chapter 6 analyses native speakers' responses to foreign speakers' RCs and examines their correction strategies. This chapter concerns itself with the question of how successful RCs are in eliciting correction intelligible to them. Chapter 7 deals with the avoidance of RCs: how foreign speakers cope with comprehension problems without asking for help from native speakers. In Chapter 8 I shall summarise the major findings of the study and discuss the importance of the corrective aspect of communicative competence in relation to foreign language teaching.

NOTES

1. The twelve papers contained in Faerch and Kasper (eds) (1983) are all concerned with interlanguage communication strategies, and *Interlanguage Studies Bulletin Utrecht*, a major journal in this field, contains a number of related articles. Articles not directly mentioned in this study include: Beebe 1980; Palmberg 1981/82, 1984; Poullisse et al. 1984; Paribakht 1985.
2. What Selinker (1972) calls 'strategies of second language communication' seem to refer more to 'production strategies' (Tarone 1981) than to what we call 'correction strategies' in this study.
3. Faerch and Kasper (1980, 1984) note that there are both productive and receptive strategies. They say that 'receptive communication strategies can also result in hypothesis formation: the learner might use his prior L1, IL [interlanguage: AO] or contextual knowledge in order to understand L2 items which are not yet part of his IL system' (1984:54). This account of receptive strategies points to 'processing strategies' rather than correction strategies.
4. Corder (1978) contrasts 'message adjustment strategies' with 'resource expansion strategies', whereas Faerch and Kasper (1980) employ the terms 'reduction strategies' and 'achievement strategies' respectively.
5. Neustupný (1973) distinguishes three types of corrective adjustment: 'pre-correction' refers to a corrective adjustment executed before a stretch of utterance starts; 'in-correction' occurs before a string comes to an end; and 'post-correction' after a string terminates. In these terms, both RC and RC avoidance are typically post-corrective adjustments for coping with comprehension problems which have arisen. However, they may also constitute pre-corrective adjustments in so far as an RC may be motivated to eliminate anticipated problems which may arise because of lack of comprehension, and RC avoidance strategies may be selected when the listener fears that the use of RC will violate some other communication rules (e.g. politeness rules) and result in another problem. (cf. Neustupný 1978a:249-250).

Chapter 2

DATA: SOURCE AND REPRESENTATION

Natural conversations between native and non-native speakers who have a genuine desire to communicate are the ideal data for the study of communication strategies. However, it is very difficult to collect a large amount of data of this kind if we wish to incorporate the spoken data of lower level learners. The basic problem is that the communicative output of such speakers in genuine communicative situations is very limited. In addition, the technical problems of recording in such situations are considerable. Due to these limitations our data is derived from interview situations in which foreign speakers were assigned to interview or to be interviewed by native speakers in Japanese. Their task was to elicit or provide information: the focus of attention was on communication rather than on the manipulation of linguistic rules.

Though the roles of interviewer and interviewee were assigned to each participant, role separation was not absolute, and interviewees occasionally directed questions to the interviewers. Our data may thus be best characterised as 'quasi-interview discourse'.

2.1 Participants

The present study is based upon 55 interviews, of approximately 10 hours total duration. 15 native speakers and 31 foreign speakers of Japanese were involved. Of the 15 native speakers six were male and nine were female, with ages ranging from the early 20s to the 40s, and most of them had extensive experience of interacting with non-native speakers in both English and Japanese. The most actively involved native speaker took part in nine interviews, four times as an interviewer and five times as an interviewee. The least involved native speakers were those who were interviewed just once (cf. Table 2.2).

The 31 foreign speakers were all students in the Department of Japanese, Monash University. They differed markedly in their proficiency in Japanese: some were still at an elementary level while others had attained a highly advanced degree of competence. Since there is no authoritative objective test available for grading proficiency, four judges (three native speakers and one non-native speaker) were independently assigned to evaluate the subjects' overall ability in Japanese. On the basis of their assessment, the 31 foreign speakers were grouped into four levels of proficiency (highest 4, lowest 1) as follows:

Table 2.1: Foreign speakers and Proficiency levels

Proficiency level	Number of foreign speakers
IV (highest)	7
III	6
II	7
I (lowest)	11
Total	31

2.2 Data types

The data can be divided into four types in terms of the tasks assigned to the non-native speakers and of the situations in which they were assigned. Data A consists of 40 interviews of approximately 350 minutes in total. The 20 subjects were interviewed by a native speaker for about eight minutes; subsequently, the subjects interviewed another Japanese speaker for about another eight minutes with the purpose of eliciting from him or her as much information as possible. In this latter section they were instructed to play the role of a reporter for a school newspaper and afterwards to present a report in English about their findings.

It was made clear to the non-native subjects that the interview sessions were not designed to assess their individual ability, but to find out what kind of problems they faced and what sort of mistakes they made during the course of interaction with native speakers.

The purpose and the instructions were explained one week before the interviews, to allow them to prepare for the sessions. The interviews were conducted in the office of one of the teachers, with no one present except the two participants. The tape-recorder was operated by the native speakers. The data was obtained at four different times in 1982.

Data B was derived from speaking tests for third year students. In the first part of the test, the students were instructed to answer questions raised by a visiting professor of sociology who was doing research on Australian society. They were told beforehand that the interviews would be centred around the topics covered in the conversation classes, such as unemployment, sex discrimination and other social issues in Australia. This part of the test was administered in June, 1982. The second part of the test was carried out in October the same year. This time the students were instructed to interview a different Japanese speaker about problems of Japanese children returning to Japan after residing overseas. They had previously watched a television programme dealing with the issue and discussed it in class.

Both tests were conducted in the office of their conversation teacher. She was present during the interviews to operate the tape-recorder and to assess the students' performance. Data B consists of eight interviews, of approximately one hour and 47 minutes total duration.

Data C is very similar to data B in that it derives from part of the oral test for three fourth year students. They were instructed to interview a Japanese speaker about one or two topics selected from four prescribed topics. Two students chose the topic of the problems of aged people and the other student chose Japanese language teaching in Australia and friendship with Australians as topics. The interviews were conducted in the departmental library with two Japanese teachers present. The three interviews lasted for about 52 minutes in total.

Data D contains four interviews, of 100 minutes total duration. The common feature of these interviews is that the non-native speakers involved were all highly advanced, with a competence close to native speakers. One of the subjects was instructed by his teacher to record an interview with an employee of a Japanese firm about his business in Australia. The student conducted the interview at the interviewee's home. Another student interviewed a Japanese post-graduate student in the author's office, and the remaining two were interviewed by a visiting professor from Japan in his office.

Except for the last three students, the subjects were not informed that their interviews were to be used for research purposes. However, permission was obtained at a later stage from all the participants, both native and non-native, to include their spoken discourse in the data base of the present study. Details of the data are summarised in Table 2.2.

Table 2.2: Data type and participants

Non-native speaker						Native Speakers	
Date type	Ref. no.	Sex	Year	HSC	Stay in Japan	Ref. no as interviewer	As interviewee
A	101	F	2	-	-	N4	N3
	102	M	2	-	-	N4	N3
	103	F	2	-	-	N3	N4
	104	M	2	-	-	N10	N7
	105	F	1	+	-	N2	N5
	106	F	1	+	-	N2	N5
	107	F	1	+	-	N2	N5
	108	F	2	+	-	N8	N6
	109	F	3	-	-	N9	N3
	110	F	3	-	-	N9	N3
	111	F	3	-	-	N8	N1
	201	F	1	+	+	N1	N2
	202	F	1	+	+	N1	N2
	203	F	1	+	+	N1	N3
	204	F	1	+	+	N2	N5

	205	F	2	+	+	N8	N1
	206	F	3	-	-	N8	N1
	301	F	1	+	+	N1	N2
	302	F	2	+	+	N8	N1
	303	F	3	-	-	N8	N1
B	207	F	3	+	-	N11	N12
	304	F	3	+	+	N11	N12
	305	F	3	+	+	N11	N12
	401	F	3	+	-	N11	N12
C	306	F	4	+	-	-	N13
	402	F	4	-	-	-	N13
	403	F	4	+	+	-	N13
D	404	M	P.G.	-	+	-	N14
	405	F	P.G.	+	+	-	N6
	406	F	P.G.	-	+	N15	-
	407	M	P.G.	-	+	N15	-
Total number of interviews:						26	29

Notes:

1. Non-native subjects are identified by three-digit numbers: the first figure indicates their proficiency level and is followed by a sequential number.
2. HSC stands for Higher School Certificate. Subjects marked +HSC had passed the HSC Japanese examination, i.e. they had acquired basic Japanese at high school. Those marked -HSC began studying Japanese at university.
3. In the 'Stay in Japan' column + is assigned to 14 subjects who had spent more than one year in Japan. Many of them were former exchange students at Japanese high schools.

2.3 Follow-up interviews

This study also employs data obtained from follow-up interviews. A follow-up interview is intended to collect retrospective data from the interviewee to supplement the primary data. It is true that a large part of our daily conversation is spontaneous and that we are not always conscious of what we are doing when conversing. However, there are also times when we are aware of communication problems which arise during the course of interaction and we are often conscious of employing correction strategies in an attempt to overcome such problems. Neustupný (1981) emphasises the importance of follow-up interviews as an indispensable tool in identifying communication problems, particularly those problems which are not manifested on the surface of spoken data. The following two examples from the present study demonstrate the usefulness of follow-up interviews:

Example 1

1. Native Speaker (NS): *a- e- oosutorariajin no kokuminsei to nihonjin no kokuminsei no chigai .. nanika kanjita koto arimasen ká*
2. Foreign Speaker (FS): *e- demochotto muzukashii [fu-n] .. doko ga chigau ka [fu-n] .. chotto iu no wa muzukashii [a-] to omou.*
3. NS: *... e-to .. nihongo .. are- donna koto ga muzukashii desu ká nihongò.*
(N1-F301:53)
- 1' NS: Does anything in particular strike you about the differences in national characteristics between Japanese and Australians?
- 2' FS: Yes, but it is difficult to say exactly what it is.
- 3' NS: Well, umm, what do you find difficult about the Japanese language?

Superficially there appears to be no problem in this excerpt, but the FS stated in the follow-up interview that she did not know the word *kokuminsei* 'national characteristics' and so felt unable to answer the question. The detection of this comprehension problem and RC avoidance would have been impossible without the follow-up interview.

Example 2

1. FS: *ano- tomodachi to issho ni su*
(su | nderu wake) desu ká
2. NS: *| soo desù*
3. FS: *u-n ano-osutorariajin no tomodachi*
4. NS: *.. u-ñ mitai | (na mono desune) |*
5. FS: *| mitai (laugh) | mitai*
6. NS: *mitai*
7. FS: *dooiuimī*
8. NS: *ano-- imin shite kita hito .. dakarà*
(F203-N2:97)
- 1' FS: Um, are you .. (living with) a friend?
- 2' NS: Yes, I am.
- 3' FS: Um, is he an Australian friend?
- 4' NS: Well, he is kind of Australian.
- 5' FS: Kind of? (laugh)
- 6' NS: Yes, kind of.

7' FS: What do you mean by that?

8' NS: Well, he is someone who has immigrated to Australia.

In the follow-up interview, the NS said that she had felt unwilling to talk about this topic, and she mentioned that a native speaker interlocutor would have sensed her reluctance from her facial expression and tone of voice and would not have attempted to pursue the subject.

The author conducted follow-up interviews with all foreign speakers except for three speakers in data C; these follow-up interviews were conducted mainly in English for level I speakers and in Japanese for more advanced speakers. Seven native speakers were also interviewed.

The follow-up interviews were conducted when the first horizontal transcriptions (see next section) had been prepared, 2 – 6 weeks after the original interviews. At the beginning of the follow-up interviews the author briefly explained the purpose of the research, i.e. to examine how native and non-native speakers interact in Japanese, and asked the subjects to comment on what they had felt and thought during the interview(s) while listening to the original recording. An attempt was made not to force them to feel obliged to comment. An average follow-up interview lasted approximately one hour, although this was often not long enough to cover an original interview lasting ten minutes.

2.4 Transcription

A transcription reflects the researcher's aims and theoretical standpoint (Ochs 1979). In what follows we outline how the interviews used in this study were transcribed and what notational conventions have been adopted.

Two types of transcription were made, which we may refer to as 'horizontal' and 'vertical'. In horizontal transcription, two parallel lines are assigned to the speaker and listener respectively, and the representation proceeds from the left to right concurrently. Horizontal transcriptions are ideal to represent overlapping stretches of speech and what have been called 'back-channel responses' (Duncan 1972). Examples (3) and (4) illustrate these points:

Example 3

[FS:	<i>a-- watashi wa M desu</i>	<i>doozo hai doozo</i>	<i>yoroshiku</i>
]	NS:	<i>Msan</i>	<i>yoroshiku</i>	

[FS':	My name is M. I'm...	Yes.	I'm pleased to meet you.
]	NS':	Miss M?	I'm pleased to meet you.	

The transcription clearly shows that *M san* and *doozo* overlap, as do the two utterances of *yoroshiku*.

Example 4

- 1 [NS: *maa mondai aru ka mo wakaranai kedo nedemo*
 FS: *haihai*
- 2 [NS: *ichinen gurai tatsu to ne ano daitai ano*
 FS: *ee*
- 3 [NS: *daijoobu mitaidesune*
 FS: *daijoobu ha-i soo desu ka*
- 1' [NS: Well, there may be some problems, but...
 FS: uh huh
- 2' [NS: after about a year or so
 FS: Yes
- 3' [NS: it would seem to be almost alright.
 FS: It's okay is it? I see.

The FS in this example interjects *haihai*, *ee* and *daijoobu* while the NS is speaking. Conversation with more than three participants is particularly difficult to represent unless we employ horizontal transcription.

However, this type of transcription is not always suitable, because it does not clearly reflect the turn-taking structure. Vertical transcriptions are designed to segment the flow of conversation into turns, so that example (3) is represented vertically as follows:

Example 3'

1. FS: *a-- watashi wa M desu* | *doozo*
2. NS: | *Msan*
3. FS: *hai doozo* | *yoroshiku*
4. NS: | *yoroshiku*

where a vertical bar (|) indicates overlapping parts of the discourse.

Horizontal transcriptions of the interview data used in this study were first prepared by a Japanese native speaker and then checked against the original recording by the author. Some unclear points were further checked with the original speakers of the utterances during the follow-up interviews. Finally the corrected transcriptions were returned to the transcriber for re-checking.

Vertical transcriptions were prepared by the author on the basis of the horizontal transcriptions. Particular attention was paid to the overlapping speech, pauses, terminal intonation and prominence.

Most of the notational conventions adopted were derived from the work of the Sacks and his colleagues, but some modifications were made to meet the purpose of this study.

2.4.1 Terminal intonation

This study, based on the analyses of Japanese intonation by Yoshizawa (1960), Abe (1966) and Miyaji (1971) employs four types of terminal intonation. These are marked: rising (ˆ), falling (˘), sustained (-) and prominent high pitch (ˆ). The four terminal intonation patterns can be illustrated as follows:

Rising	<u>soo</u> desu <u>nê</u>
Falling	<u>soo</u> desu <u>nê</u>
Sustained	<u>soo</u> desu <u>neē</u>
High pitch	<u>soo</u> desu <u>nê</u>

These shapes appear to be the basic intonation patterns and they occur frequently in the data. The markers will be combined when necessary to capture more complex patterns (e.g. soo desu neē : soo desu nê).

2.4.2 Pauses

Following Ōishi (1971), pause is indicated by dots. A very brief pause, which would not normally be noticed unless special attention is being paid to pausal phenomena, was marked by a single dot in our transcription; however, it does not appear in the examples quoted in subsequent chapters unless it is relevant to the points discussed. Double dots indicate a short pause which is easily noticed but not unnatural. An unnatural longer pause, which frequently implies a communication problem, is marked by four dots.

Example 5

NS: *seikatsu no shikata no kiban ga dekita n desu keredomô .. yappari ōsutorariajin ni wa narenai shi .. uun soo desu nê*

NS': I have built up the basis of my life, but all the same, I can't actually become an Australian...

The unnatural long pauses also include cases when participants interrupt speech because they are giving attention to things other than conversation, as when checking a dictionary, taking notes, etc. In addition, three dots are used when it is difficult clearly to identify a pause as natural or unnatural.

2.4.3 Overlapping

The beginning of an overlapping stretch of speech is marked by a vertical bar. In example (6) below, turns 2 and 3 are partly overlapping. Turns 1 and 2 are not strictly overlapping, but a vertical bar is used to indicate that NS's turn 1 is interrupted by FS's turn 2:

Example 6

1. NS: *e-to-* .. *e-* *toogoroñ* .. *uuntō*
Well .. um syntax .. syn
2. FS: | *too* | *go*
Synt
3. NS: | *toogoroñ*
Syntax
4. FS: *uhûn*
Uh huh

When space does not allow this representation of overlapping speech, one of the utterances is moved to the beginning of the line. Thus, example (6) can also be represented as follows:

Example 6'

1. NS: *e-to-* .. *e-* *toogoroñ* .. *uuntō* |
2. FS: | *too* | *go*
3. NS: | *toogoroñ*
4. FS: *uhûn*

2.4.4. *Aizuchi* or backchannel responses

Japanese has a rich variety of expressions of the type referred to as backchannel responses (Duncan 1972; Fukushima 1982; Mizutani 1983; LoCastro 1983). Response words such as *un*, *ee*, *haa*, *hee*, *hoo*, *fuun*, and such expressions as *soo desu ne*, *soo desu ka*, *naruhodo*, *hontoo*, etc., are frequently used by the listener to signal such messages as 'I see', 'That's right', 'That's new to me', 'Really?', or simply 'I'm listening to you'. These are called *aizuchi* in Japanese.

In this study an *aizuchi* is defined as a short element or set phrase of the type exemplified above which is interjected by the listener while the speaker continues to talk:

Example 7

- 1 [NS: *mada detenai n desu gā* *ima ano-*
FS: *a soo desu kà* (1)

- 2 [NS: *masutaa no ronbun o kaite de moo .. dashita*
 FS: *hai* (2) *eè* (3)
- 3 [NS: *n desu kedò* *sorede kekka gā*
 FS: *a soo desu kà* (4)
- 1' [NS: (The results) aren't out yet.
 FS: Oh, really?
- 2' [NS: I have just written and submitted my Masters thesis....
 FS: Oh, I see.
- 3' [NS: (But I don't know) the result (yet).
 FS:

(1), (2) and (3) are interjected into the NS's utterance, and they are not followed by any substantial utterance by the FS. These are typical examples of *aizuchi*. (4) is functionally very close to *aizuchi*, but it is different from (1) – (3) in that it is not interjected into the NS's utterance: the falling intonation imposed on *kedo* indicates the end of the utterance, and furthermore, the next utterance starting with *sorede* is preceded by a long pause. Example (7') is a vertical version of example (7) in which *aizuchi* are placed in square brackets:

Example 7'

1. NS: *mada detenai n desu gā [a soo desu kà] .. ima ano-masutaa no [hai] ronbun o kaite de moo [eè] .. dashita n desu kedò*
2. FS: *a soo desu kà*
3. NS: *sorede kekka gā*
- 1' NS: (The results) aren't out yet [Oh, really?]
 I have just written [uh huh] and submitted my Masters thesis.
- 2' FS: Oh, I see.
- 3' NS: (But I don't know) the result (yet).

As seen in example (7), *aizuchi* often overlap with the utterance of the speaker. This short overlapping cannot be properly represented in the vertical transcription, but it does not seem to be relevant to the present study.

2.4.5 Other conventions

A dash indicates a lengthened syllable, and two dashes a greatly lengthened syllable. Examples:

- a-- watashi wa M desu* Ummmm I'm M
a-no- .. soo desu neē We-ll, let me see-

Stressed and high pitched sounds are indicated by a marker (^). Examples:

moo demokurashii ga zenzen nai desho^o asoko ni wa de dēmokurashii demōkurashii
Democracy doesn't exist at all there

Parentheses indicate that the recorded utterance is not clear. They are also used to indicate paralinguistic sounds on the part of the *speaker* such as laughter, coughing, etc.:

aborijinii- (janakute) hokano.. ano () a- (laugh) nanto iú
Aborigines (no, I mean), other um (laugh) what shall I say

Unclear *aizuchi* and paralinguistic sounds produced by the *listener* are placed in [] as in:

kowaku-ima--dattara [cough] dekinai to omoù
It is horrifying. I wouldn't [cough] do that now

A line placed over an utterance indicates that the utterance is made with laughter. An utterance in a marked low voice is indicated by underlining:

uun .. wakarimasen (laugh)
Umm I don't know (laugh)

Finally, slow speech is marked by a wavy line placed underneath:

e-to nèè .. hakasekatei .. hakase wa doctor
Let me see. *Hakase* means doctor.

2.4.6 Glosses

Since it is assumed that most readers of this study will have some knowledge of Japanese, word-to-word translations are not given. The English translation which immediately follows the Japanese text is approximate; it does not reflect false starts, pause fillers, stammering and other features of speech. The translation aims at showing what has been said, rather than how it has been said.

2.4.7 Romanisation

In the romanised transcription of Japanese data, the Hepburn system is employed with the following modifications: long vowels are represented as *aa*, *ii*, *uu*, *ee*, and *oo*; and the mora nasal phoneme is always represented by *n*.

2.4.8 Numbering

Each excerpt presented in this study is followed by a number combining the reference numbers of the participants (interviewer, interviewee) with the initial turn number. Thus, in example (1) above, (N1-F301:53) indicates that native speaker N1 interviews foreign speaker F301 and that the first turn in the example corresponds to turn 53 in the transcript of the interview. Examples constructed to clarify a point of discussion are marked with an asterisk.

Chapter 3

REQUESTS FOR CLARIFICATION (RCs)

Requests for Clarification (RCs) have been defined in section 1.5 as corrective strategies by the listener aimed at attaining the goal of understanding what has been said. Foreign language learners, particularly those whose proficiency level is not very high, use RCs extensively. We have also ample evidence which suggests that RC avoidance is not uncommon. As we shall discuss in detail later, frequent occurrence of RCs and their avoidance are conspicuous features of native-foreign interaction and they deserve close examination.

The phenomenon here called RC has been dealt with by scholars in the fields of ethnomethodology (Jefferson 1972; Schegloff 1972; Schegloff, Jefferson and Sacks, 1977), child language acquisition (Keenan and Schieffelin 1976; Corsaro 1977; Garvey 1977, 1979; Cherry 1979) and adult second language learning (Hatch 1978; Marriott 1978; Gaskill 1980; Schwartz 1980; Varonis and Gass 1985). Their focus of attention, conceptual frameworks, and terminology vary markedly, and some of these researchers are centrally concerned with this phenomenon, while others mention it only in passing. On RC avoidance, there has not, to my knowledge, been any empirical work done thus far.

In this chapter we first discuss problems concerning the identification of RCs in natural conversation and further define an RC in 3.1. Section 3.2 presents a brief account of the discourse structure surrounding an RC and defines the terminology used in this study. In 3.3 we classify major types of RCs identified in our data.

3.1 Identification of RCs

At the outset, it should be emphasised that in this study an RC is functionally defined: RC is a strategy which the listener adopts to solve a comprehension problem. This functional definition leads to the complicated question of interpreting utterance intention.

Example 1*

1. NS: *oosutoraria no nyuushi wa nihon to kurabete doo desu ka*
- 2. FS: *...nyuushi*
3. NS: *e-*
4. FS: *..yoku shiranai n desu ga*

- 1' NS: What are Australian entrance exams like compared to Japanese ones?
 -2' FS: Entrance exams?
 3' NS: Yes, that's right.
 4' FS: I don't really know ...

Is (1.2) an RC or not? One plausible interpretation would be that the foreign speaker has not heard the key word *nyuushi* 'entrance examination' in the question clearly and wishes to check it. Another interpretation would be that the foreign speaker does not know the word and expects the native speaker to explain it; but instead the native speaker takes (1.2) as a request for confirmation, believing that the foreign speaker already knows the word. In these cases, (1.2) is an RC. However, it is also possible to interpret (1.2) as a repetition of the word by the foreign speaker as a pause-filler. If this is the case, then (1.2) is not an RC.¹

This example suggests that an RC is not always clearly identifiable. In this study dubious cases are not counted as RCs. However, in many cases intonation, and the larger context in which the RC is placed, provide us with clues to distinguish RCs from other types of questions. In addition the use of follow-up interviews provides us with further information on which to base judgements as to whether a certain utterance is an RC or not.

Since we have defined an RC in terms of function, strictly speaking we cannot ignore silences and pause-fillers which fulfil similar roles. In our data a corrective utterance occasionally follows immediately after a longer pause and/or a pause-filler(s), as in example (2):

Example 2

1. FS: *ima a-yoku .. a- kaikyoo byoo no kimochi ni marimasu ka*
 -2. NS: ...
 3. FS: *a- [hai] tatoeba .. a- ho homesickness*
 4. NS: *a- hai* [(laugh)]

(F106-N5:39)

- 1' FS: Do you often wish you were home again?
 2' NS:
 3' FS: I mean do you ever feel homesick?
 4' NS: Oh, yes [laugh]

(2.1) is a complete question accompanied by a clear rising intonation, and therefore it is certain that the FS expects the NS to answer the question. Contrary to her expectation, however, the NS does not take the speaking turn. This results in the three-dot pause in (2.2).

We have assigned this pause to the NS because we assume that the NS knows that the turn has been passed to her and yet she is unable to take it. This assumption was supported by the comment made by the NS during the follow-up interview that she was unable to interpret

kaikyobyoo. Due to this long silence the FS realises that she has failed to get the question across, and in (2.3) she attempts to correct her question by giving the English equivalent of *kaikyobyoo* 'homesickness'. The inserted *hai* by the NS after *a-* in (2.3) sounds as if she is inviting such a correction, and her response in (2.4) clearly shows that she has now understood the question. Here we can safely assume that the silence in (2.2) is caused by the NS's comprehension problem and induces the FS in (2.3) to correct her question. We shall call pauses and pause-fillers like (2.2) 'non-verbal RCs', in contrast with 'verbal RCs' which indicate the speaker's intention by linguistic means.

In connection with non-verbal RCs, it should be mentioned that a considerable number of verbal RCs are preceded by a longer pause and/or a pause filler, as in example (3):

Example 3

1. FS: *rainen n [un] nihon nihon ni ikimasu*
2. NS: *.. moo kimemashitá*
- 3. FS: *.. a- ... ! wakari* (laugh)
4. NS: *! (tabun) tabun ikimasuká*
(N4-F101:32)

- 1' FS: I'm going to Japan next year.
- 2' NS: Have you definitely decided to go?
- 3' FS: I don't ...
- 4' NS: Is it very likely that you will go?

The FS did not understand *kimeru* 'to decide'. It seems that the pause-filler and the two pauses in (3.3) are akin to a non-verbal RC. They elicit the corrective move from the NS in (3.4), which happens to overlap with the explicit verbal RC. We are of course not arguing that all long pauses and pause-fillers which are followed by a corrective utterance by the other speaker are non-verbal RCs. In this regard, visual cues are of crucial importance: it is highly likely that a non-verbal RC will be accompanied by a puzzled expression, gestures, body movements, etc. Indeed, it may be more accurate to say that it is such non-verbal cues, rather than pauses, that signal a comprehension problem.

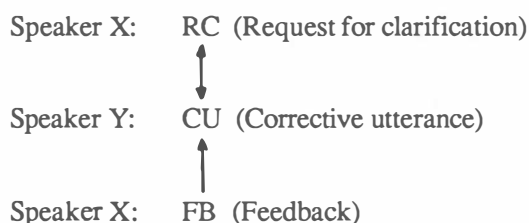
Since our interviews were not video-taped, we are not equipped with enough data to discuss non-verbal RCs fully, despite their obvious importance in this area. In the body of this study we shall limit ourselves to verbal RCs and the term RC refers to a verbal RC unless otherwise stated.

3.2 Organisation of RC sequences

Conversation normally consists of a series of utterances made by different speakers, one being followed by another to form a meaningful sequence. Participants cooperate to produce a coherent discourse by providing and eliciting new information about a conversational topic, and at the end

of a section in conversation they negotiate to terminate or continue the encounter. Conversation proceeds from one section to another in orderly fashion. However, the flow may be disturbed by a sequence of utterances which does not make a direct contribution to the development of conversation. Since such sequences stand aside from the main stream of discourse, or what we here call the **main sequence**, Jefferson (1972) calls them 'side sequences'. A sub-type of side sequence is an **RC sequence** which begins with an RC. An RC sequence is a cooperative undertaking to solve a comprehension problem so that the main sequence can be continued. It is very similar to what Jefferson calls a 'misapprehension sequence'.

An RC initiates a correction process, requiring a corrective response from the speaker of the trouble source utterance. An RC and the following response form what we call an **RC exchange**. As noted by other scholars (Cherry 1979; Varonis and Gass 1985), an RC exchange is often followed by feedback:



This three-turn sequence is an example of an RC sequence. An RC sequence is defined as a sequence which contains one or more RC exchange.

The bidirectional arrow between RC and CU indicates their interactional relationship: an RC requires a corrective utterance and a corrective utterance is directed to an RC. Absence of a corrective response is noticed as awkward by the RC user unless a proper reason is thought of. Corrective utterances do not necessarily require feedback, and feedback is often absent in natural discourse.² It should also be noted that feedback does not necessarily mean that the comprehension problem has been solved, but it may signal that the RC sequence has come to an end and that the speaker proposes to return to the main sequence.

An RC is almost always made in reference to the immediately preceding trouble-source utterance. Following Varonis and Gass (1985), this trouble-source utterance is here called a **trigger (TR)**. A trigger can be any type of utterance, and it is not intended to elicit an RC. An utterance is retrospectively regarded as a trigger only when an RC follows it. 'Trigger', unlike RC, CU and FB, is not a label which designates a communicative function of utterances.

The two excerpts from our data presented below illustrate some examples of RC sequences:

Example 4

(Talking about Australian football)

1. NS: *de-ruuru ga yoku wakaranai shi .. sugoku ranboo na geemu da to omotteta n desu nē*
- 2. FS: *..ranbō*
- 3. NS: *ranboo roughi*

-3. NS: *ranboo rough*

-4. FS: *a-à*

5. NS: *demo- yoku miteru to- sugoku minna umai deshoó*

(F103-N4:62)

1' NS: I don't really understand the rules, and I thought it was a very rough game.

-2' FS: Ranbo?

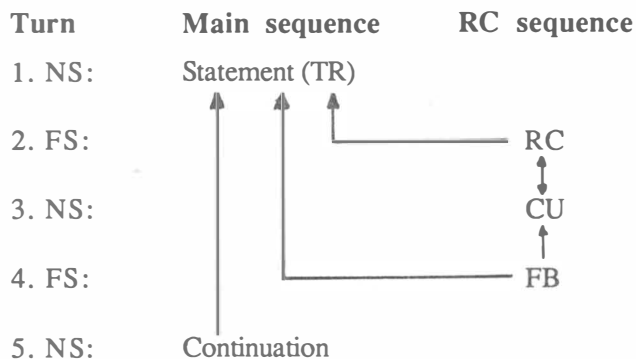
-3' NS: I said *ranboo*. It means rough.

-4' FS: I see

5' NS: But if you watch closely, you can see that the players are all very skilful.

The RC in (4.2) succeeds in eliciting a desired corrective utterance in (4.3), which is in turn followed by feedback in (4.4). The feedback clearly indicates that the comprehension problem has been solved. The feedback signals that 'Now let's get back to the main sequence'. The NS keeps on talking about the same topic in (4.5). This excerpt is schematically presented below:

Example 4'



In this example, it is possible to interpret the feedback as being directed both to the corrective utterance and to the trigger in (4.1). This dual function of the feedback is indicated by the two arrows leading from it.

Example 5

1. NS: *tomodachi wa sugu dekimashita ká*

-2. FS: *tomodachi wa sudè*

-3. NS: *e sugù | dekimashita ká |*

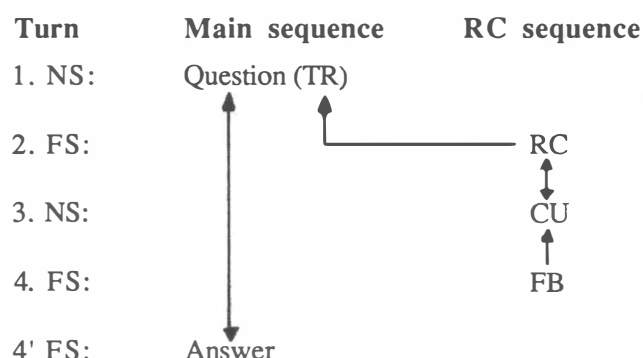
-4. FS: *| a² | haì dekimashità*

(N2-F204:21)

- 1' NS: Were you able to make friends easily?
 -2' FS: Was I able to?
 -3' NS: Yes, could you make friends easily?
 -4' FS: Yes, I could.

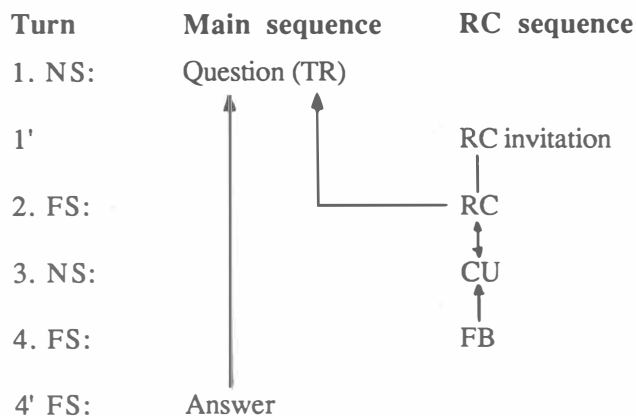
The last turn in the example consists of two moves.³ The first move *a*- constitutes feedback to the corrective utterance in (5.3), and *hai dekimashita* is the second move which replies to the initial question in (5.1). Example (5) can be analysed as follows:

Example 5'



The two examples cited above each contain only one RC exchange. An RC sequence is called a **simple RC sequence** if it contains only one RC exchange.

A special case of a simple RC sequence is a sequence which contains what is here called an 'RC invitation'. The speaker may wish to check the listener's understanding (e.g. 'Do you know the word 'etymology'?'). Varonis and Gass (1985) call this type of utterance as a 'comprehension check'. The native speakers in our data used explicit as well as implicit techniques for this kind of checking. They paused lengthily after seemingly difficult words or prolonged the final vowel of such words as if to invite an RC from the foreign listeners. Since these implicit checks do not possess eliciting force, it is not appropriate to extend the term 'comprehension checks' to them; and in any case this term is perhaps best used to refer to the listener's attempts to check his own comprehension (e.g. Does 'etymology' mean the study of the origin of words?). On these grounds, we employ the term RC invitation to refer to explicit or implicit attempts by the speaker to check the listener's comprehension. In this case a simple RC sequence may be four turns long as shown below:



A corrective utterance may trigger a further RC, to produce a sequence containing more than one RC exchange. This is called a complex RC sequence. (6.3) to (6.9) in example (6) below is such a sequence:

Example 6

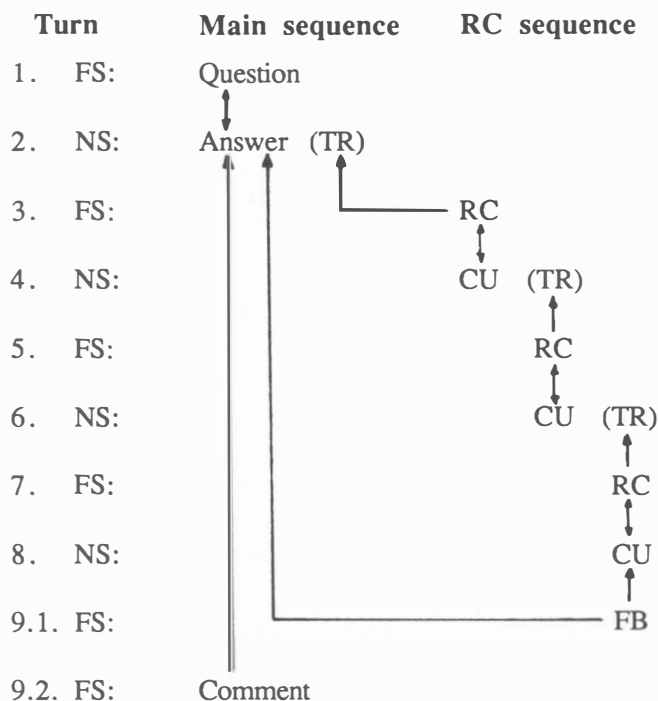
1. FS: *an donna hon wa suki desu kã*
2. NS: *soo desu ne a ano anmãri* [(laugh)] .. *suiiri shoosetsu ga suki desu*
- 3. FS: *ẽ nan desu kã*
- 4. NS: *suirishoosetsu*
- 5. FS: *shuirisoosetsu*
- 6. NS: *a suiiri-*
- 7. FS: *suiiri*
- 8. NS: *ẽ to itte a- sasupensu*
- 9.1. FS: *a` soo desu kã*
- 9.2. *a- hãhãhã omoshiroi desu nẽ*

(F303-N1:25)

- 1' FS: What kinds of books do you like?
- 2' NS: Well ... I, um (laugh) I like mysteries.
- 3' FS: What was that?
- 4' NS: *Suirishoosetsu*
- 5' FS: *Shuirisoosetsu?*
- 6' NS: No, *suiiri*.

- 7' FS: *Suiri* is it?
 -8' NS: Yes, it means suspense.
 -9.1' FS: Oh, I see.
 9.2 That's interesting.

Example 6'



There are three RC exchanges in this example. The first two exchanges, (6.3) – (6.4) and (6.5) – (6.6) fail to solve the understanding problem caused by the lexical item *suirishoosetsu*. It seems that the NS interprets the first RC as a repetition request and responds accordingly in (6.4). In (6.6) the NS again repeats the first half of the word: this is most likely to be an attempt to correct the mispronunciation *shuiri* by the FS. In (6.9) the FS indicates that the understanding problem has been resolved when the NS provides an English equivalent for *suirishoosetsu* in (6.8). RC sequences in contact situations are far more complex than we tend to think.

In this section we have defined RC exchanges, simple and complex RC sequences, and briefly described the typical organisation of these sequences.

3.3 Types of RCs

RCs can be classified in several ways. Cherry (1979), who analyses adults' requests for clarification directed to children in native situations, initially divides RCs into two types depending on the kind of information requested, and then subcategorises each type according to formal properties (e.g. lexical, non-lexical, repetition, etc.). Garvey (1977) also employs two classificatory criteria which she calls 'selectivity function' and 'determining function'. By 'selectivity function' she means that, in our terms, an RC specifies a trouble spot, i.e. it refers to an element(s) to be clarified. 'Determining function' refers to the fact that an RC requests a particular type of response.

On the basis of these classifications, we shall adopt three criteria: intention, form, and referent. Both Cherry and Garvey take into account the kinds of response that RCs are intended to elicit. Since we are concerned with communication, RC intentions must indeed be the primary criterion for classification. As a secondary criterion we shall select RC forms on the grounds that RC forms reflect foreign speakers' proficiency levels in Japanese. It is also important for pedagogical reasons to identify inappropriate RC forms. In addition to these major criteria, RC referents (i.e. Garvey's selectivity function) are taken into account as a minor criterion.

3.3.1 RC intentions

We have so far used the term 'comprehension problem' loosely, but what precisely do we mean by it? In highly simplified terms, comprehension involves two distinct, though closely interrelated, processes: hearing and understanding (Foss and Hakes 1978; Slobin 1979), and it seems intuitively correct to assume that comprehension problems include hearing problems and understanding problems.

A hearing problem arises when the listener fails to perceive the incoming acoustic signals satisfactorily. Understanding problems involve at least two different levels of meaning. Widdowson, for example, makes a distinction between 'signification' and 'value', saying:

Sentences have meaning as instances of usage: they express propositions by combining words into structures in accordance with grammatical rules. We call this kinds of meaning *signification*. The second kind of meaning is that which sentences and parts of sentences assume when they are put to use for communicative purposes. We will refer to this as *value*. (Widdowson 1978:11).

Signification can be understood without resorting to extralinguistic information, while value cannot. Anyone who knows English syntax and basic vocabulary is able to understand the literal meaning of the utterance 'John is honest'. However, its value (i.e. what the speaker of the utterance intends to convey) cannot be determined with certainty until information is provided about the context in which it was uttered, the relationship between the speaker and John, etc.

Almost all understanding problems experienced by the foreign speakers in our data appear to have been problems of signification. One of the very few RCs directed to value is cited below:

Example 7 (cf. example (2) in Chapter 2)

(Talking about the NS's roommate.)

1. FS: *u-n ano- osutorariajin no tomodachi*
2. NS: *.. u-n mitai | (na mono desu ne) |*
3. FS: *| mitai (laugh) | mitai*
4. NS: *mitai*
- 5. FS: *doo iu imi*
6. NS: *ano-- imin shite kita hito .. dakara*
7. FS: *a-soo desu ka*

(F203-N2:99)

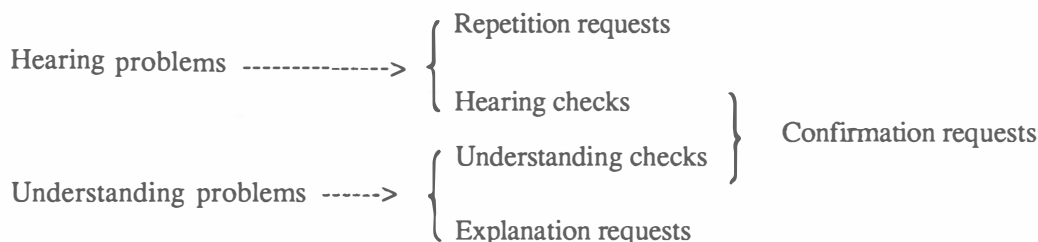
- 1' FS: Um, is your friend an Australian?
- 2' NS: Well, he is kind of Australian.
- 3' FS: Kind of?
- 4' NS: Yes, kind of.
- 5' FS: What do you mean by that?
- 6' NS: Well, he is someone who has immigrated to Australia.
- 7' FS: Oh, I see.

The FS knows the meaning of *mitai* 'like', 'sort of' and correctly understands the propositional meaning of the NS's response to the question in (7.1). However, she cannot interpret what the NS means by (*Oosutorariajin*) *mitai* 'He is kind of Australian'. That is, she knows the literal meaning of *mitai*, but is unable to understand its value in this particular context. Since the number of RCs relating to value is so few in our corpus, understanding problems in this study will in practice be restricted to problems of signification.

We have distinguished between hearing problems and understanding problems. How many request types can we distinguish? Cherry identifies only two types: requests for repetition and for confirmation. This is probably because of the nature of her data: adults seldom ask small children for explanations. In our data, however, foreign speakers frequently request explanations. Garvey, on the other hand, distinguishes four kinds of responses: repetition, confirmation, specification and elaboration, and points out that there may be some further types (Garvey 1977:70). However, it seems adequate to set up three basic request types to describe the RCs in our data: **repetition, confirmation and explanation.**

Hearing problems may lead to either a repetition request (e.g. 'Pardon?') or a confirmation request (e.g. 'Did you say PQ?'). Understanding problems may result in either a confirmation request (e.g. 'Does PQ mean XY?', 'You mean XY?') or an explanation request (e.g. 'What does PQ mean?'). In order to distinguish the two types of confirmation requests arising from different

problems, we shall introduce the terms **hearing check** and **understanding check**. Thus, we have four RC intentions in this study:



The RC intentions distinguished above are realised in various surface forms, so that we are required to infer RC intentions from these forms together with additional information obtained from the larger contexts in which they appear and from the follow-up interviews. It is not always easy to determine RC intentions objectively. With this analytical problem in mind, we shall first exemplify these four request types, and then discuss ambiguous cases later.

3.3.1.1 Repetition requests

Interjections such as *Un?* 'Huh?' and such expressions as *Nan desu ka* 'What is it?', *Moo ichido* 'Say it once again' may be used as requests for repetition. However, these expressions are inherently ambiguous, in the same way as the English expression 'I beg your pardon' (which may mean 'What did you say?' or 'What do you mean?'). However, examples (8) and (9) below clearly contain genuine repetition requests:

Example 8

1. NS: *ano- watashi no sunde (i) ru tokoro wa dandenon roodo ni chikai n desu nê*
- 2. FS: *dandé*
3. NS: *dandenon roodô*
4. FS: *a`*

(F101-N3:62)

- 1' NS: I live close to Dandenong Road.
- 2' FS: Dande?
3. NS: Dandenong Road.
4. FS: Oh.

The FS fails to hear correctly the key word *dandenon roodo* (a place name). She utters *dande*, and this RC is a clear repetition request. (9.3) below is similar:

Example 9

1. FS: *nan chuu depaato ka nâ .. shoku | -ryoohin mō*
2. NS: *| isetan isetañ*
- 3. FS: *é*
4. NS: *isetan | desu ka*
5. FS: *| a u-n isetan- kamoshiremasen nè*
(F601-N15:79)

- 1' FS: What was it? I don't remember the name of the department store.
- 2' NS: Was it Isetan?
- 3' FS: What?
- 4' NS: Do you think it was Isetan?
- 5' FS: Yes, perhaps it was.

The FS is trying to remember the name of a department store in Tokyo. The NS, in an attempt to help the FS, utters *Isetan*, the name of a large department store, in (9.2), which happens to overlap with the preceding turn.

RCs like (8.2) and (9.3) are classified as repetition requests, while ambiguous cases are treated separately as bifacial RCs (cf. section 3.3.1.5).

3.3.1.2 Hearing checks

The following examples of hearing checks are self-explanatory.

Example 10

1. NS: *nihonjin gakkoo- aru no shitte masu ká*
2. FS: *a- | do doko ni arimasu kâ*
3. NS: *| oosutoraria meruborun ni e-to-- moruban no taunhooru shitte masu ká*
- 4. FS: *mo morubañ*
5. NS: *moruban nò ..*
6. FS: *uñ*
7. NS: *e-*
8. FS: *hai | shitte imasù ano- |*
9. NS: *| ano-.. | chikaku ni aru n desu kedomō*
(F203-N2:140)

- 1' NS: Do you know that there is a school for Japanese people?
 2' FS: Oh, where is it?
 3' NS: It's in Melbourne, Australia. Um, do you know the Malvern Town Hall?
 -4' FS: Malvern?
 5' NS: Yes, Malvern.
 6' FS: Ah.
 7' NS: Er...
 8' FS: Yes I know where you mean.
 9' NS: Well, it's near there.

Example 11

1. NS: *otootosan ima oikutsú*
 -2. FS: *..otoosañ*
 3. NS: *otootosañ*
 4. FS: *otootosañ*
 5. NS: *uñ*

(N9-F110:101)

- 1' NS: How old is your younger brother?
 -2' FS: Father?
 3' NS: Your younger brother?
 4' FS: Younger brother?
 5' NS: Yes.

3.3.1.3 Understanding checks

Understanding checks are used when the listener has attained a certain degree of understanding and wishes to seek confirmation as in (12.2) below:

Example 12

1. NS: *ookina hoozeki yasan- .. hoozeki*
 -2. FS: *hoozeki (is) commercial (desu ka)*
 3. NS: *uun hoozeki wa ne yubiwa toka ne opaaru toka | ()*
 4. FS: *| o- soo desu ka*

(F110-N3:6)

- 1' NS: A large jewellers shop... (You know,) jewellery.
 -2' FS: Does 'jewellery' mean 'commercial'?
 3' NS: No, it's rings and opals and things.
 4' FS: Oh, I see.

The FS here intends to check the lexical meaning of the word *hooseki*.

There are also a considerable number of RCs of this type which are directed to latent elements implied or implicated in the preceding discourse. (13.3) below is such an RC:

Example 13

(The FS has been talking about his scholarship)

1. FS: *isshuu-kan hacki-juugo doru gurai ka nã [u-n fun] dakara anmari- zeitaku na sei (sa) ku seikatsu wa- okurenã ñ desu (nẽ)* [(laugh)].
 2. NS: *sore igai ni mo nani ka nasatteru n desu kã*
 -3. FS: *igaitte ano- arubaito desu kã*
 4. NS: *hai*

(F404-N14:139)

- 1' FS: I guess it's about \$85 a week so I can't lead a very extravagant lifestyle.
 2' NS: Are you earning anything apart from that, though?
 -3' FS: Apart from that? Do you mean part-time work?
 4' NS: Yes.

In response to (13.1) the NS asks in (13.2) whether the FS is engaged in any paying activities over and above his scholarship. However, the question does not include the key word *arubaito* 'part-time job' in its surface form. The FS here is checking whether *sore igai* refers to part-time work. Since the topic has concerned scholarships and *arubaito* has not been explicitly mentioned up to this point of the conversation, the FS appears to be a little confused. The NS no doubt assumes that the FS can understand what he is talking about; otherwise, he would have specified the key word in an overt form. Who is responsible for this communication breakdown is an interesting question, but it does not concern us at this moment. The point here is that the NS's assumption based upon the immediately preceding discourse is not shared with the FS, and this results in the RC in (13.3).

3.3.1.4 Explanation requests

Explanation requests are directed either to a particular lexical term (e.g. (14.2)) or to an entire utterance (e.g. (15.3)).

Example 14

1. NS: *mensetsu nado de wa kinchoo- suru hoo desu ká*
- 2. FS: *kinchoo wa nan desu ká*
3. NS: *doki doki shimasu ká*
4. FS: .. u-n

(N2-F106:3)

- 1' NS: Do you tend to become nervous at interviews?
- 2' FS: What does *kinchoo* mean?
- 3' NS: (It means) do you get butterflies?
- 4' FS: Yes.

Example 15

1. FS: *ima[hai] monashu to iu daigaku de nihongo ô oshiete kudasa a- suimasen a- oshieru-
kudasai masu ká*
2. NS: .. a- ie ano daigaku ga atashi o yatotte kuremaseñ
3. FS: hai () [(laugh)]
- *wakarimaseñ*

(F106-N5:29)

- 1' FS: Are you teaching at Monash University at present?
- 2' NS: Well, no, the University won't employ me.
- 3' FS: Yes? (laugh)
- I don't understand.

Above we have presented clear examples of our four kinds of RC intentions. However, examination of our data reveals that nearly half of the foreign speakers' RCs identified in fact allow two competing interpretations. Many of these RCs simply repeat or attempt to repeat a word contained in the antecedent utterance, with no additional material which would indicate the RC intention clearly. This fact compels us to adopt two compound labels to designate ambiguous RCs: repetition/explanation requests and hearing check/explanation requests. In the rest of this section we shall exemplify these two bifacial RC types.

3.3.1.5 Repetition/explanation requests

A large proportion of this RC type take the form of a one word utterance:

Example 16

1. FS: *do donna kenkyuu- a- shimasu (ka)*
2. NS: *etto ni nichijoo kaiwa nō- nihongo no nichijoo kaiwa no bunseki- desu nē*
- 3. FS: *ni nihongō-* |
4. NS: | *no- ano- conversation no- kenkyuu desu*
(F104-N7:37)

- 1' FS: What kind of research are you doing?
- 2' NS: I'm looking at everyday conversation – it's an analysis of everyday conversation in Japanese.
- 3' FS: It's Japanese ...
4. NS: I'm researching conversation.

Since *nihongo* 'Japanese' is certainly known to the FS, the trouble spot is not the repeated word but the rest of the NS's utterance (16.2). However, it is not clear whether the RC is intended to elicit repetition or explanation of the trouble spot. Thus, it is regarded as repetition/explanation request.

Example 17

1. NS: *marikosan no gokazoku wa kochira ni sunderu n desu ká*
2. FS: *ha a-n ... un....*
3. NS: *imin shite imasu ká*
4. FS: ...
5. NS: *shigoto de kite imasu ká*
6. FS:
7. NS: *koko ni zu-tto sunde imasu ká*
- 8. FS: .. *suimasen*
9. NS: *migrant desu ká*
10. FS: *hai*

(N2-F105:77)

- 1' NS: Does Mariko's family live here in Australia?
- 2' FS: Um.....
- 3' NS: Have they migrated here?
- 4' FS:

- 5' NS: Are they here for work?
 6' FS:
 7' NS: Are they going to live here permanently?
 -8' FS: Sorry.
 9' NS: Are they migrants?
 10' FS: Yes, they are.

It is obvious that the FS is facing an understanding problem. Nevertheless it is not certain whether in (17.8) she intends to elicit a repetition or an explanation of the question.

Example 18

1. NS: *nihon ni itta toki to nihon ni .. iku-mae no nihon no inshoo to nani ka chigau naa to omou koto arimashitá*
 -2. FS: .. e-e (yoku yo) mo moo ichido itte kudasai
 (N1-F202:39)
- 1' NS: When you went to Japan, was there anything that was different to what you expected?
 -2' FS: Er, could you say that again please?

Although *Moo ichido itte kudasai* literally means 'Please say that again', it is not regarded necessarily as a repetition request since foreign speakers often extend this expression to understanding problems. The listener facing an understanding problem may employ the strategy of issuing an apparent repetition request in order to avoid a more explicit indication of the real problem (cf. Neustupný 1982: 102-103).

Similarly, *ima* and *lexicon* in example (19) below are ambiguous.

Example 19

1. NS: *e- nāni o nāni ga ichiban are desu ka sono lexicon no ima made no jugyoo no naka de né [e-] nani ga ichiban inshoo ni nokotte imasú .. doo iu kotò naraimashitá*
 -2. FS: .. imá
 3. NS: *ima madè*
 -4. FS: (laugh) *a-n lexicon*
 5. NS: *doo iu koto naratte mashita naraimashita ká*
 (F110-N3:144)
- 1' NS: Considering what you have studied in Lexicon up until now, what has made the biggest impression on you? What sort of things have you learnt?
 -2' FS: At the moment?

- 3' NS: Up until now.
 -4' FS: (laugh) Um, lexicon?
 5' NS: What sort of things have you learnt?

Here it is certain that the entire question (19.1) is a problem for the FS (rather than merely the repeated words). Since we are again unable to determine the precise intention of (19.2) and (19.4), we regard them as repetition/explanation requests.

3.3.1.6 Hearing check/explanation requests

All the RCs which are classified as hearing check/explanation requests (henceforth HC/explanation requests) repeat or attempt to repeat a word in the preceding utterance, and these repeated words are the trouble spots. In the case of repetition/explanation requests discussed above, the repeated words are known to the foreign speakers, as in example (16.3), or else the attempted repetition signals simply that the foreign speakers are having difficulty in hearing or understanding the entire utterance, as in example (19.4). Example (20) below contains instances of both kinds of bifacial requests.

Example 20

1. NS: *karuchaa sentaa no benkyoo zentai wa- donna inshoo deshita ka*
 -2. FS: *donna*
 3. NS: *donna inshoo*
 -4. FS: *inshoo*
 5. NS: *ano- inshoo wa soo desu ne inpuresshon*

(N8-F206:93)

- 1' NS: What is your overall impression about studying at the Culture Centre?
 -2' FS: What was...?
 3' NS: What was your impression?
 -4' FS: *Inshoo?*
 5' NS: Well, *inshoo* means 'impression'.

Donna 'what sort of' in (20.2) is known to the FS. Here she expects the NS to repeat or explain the part which follows the word. Thus, it is a repetition/explanation request. In contrast, *inshoo* 'impression' in (20.4) repeats the trouble spot. However, it is not certain whether the FS intends to elicit explanation of the word or to check her hearing before explicitly asking for explanation. For this reason we classify (20.4) as an HC/explanation request. In the same way, (21.2) below is considered to be an HC/explanation request.

Example 21

1. NS: *zuibun nihongo ga .. umai desu nê*
- 2. FS: *a- umai*
3. NS: *uh ojoozu desu nê*
4. FS: *o- mada dame desu*

(N4-F102:9)

- 1' NS: You're really proficient at Japanese.
- 2' FS: Proficient?
- 3' NS: You're really good (at Japanese).
- 4' FS: Oh, no, I'm not.

To sum up, we have selected RC intention as the primary criterion for RC classification and initially set up four request types. However, nearly half of the RCs issued by the foreign speakers in our data are ambiguous in terms of intentions. Consequently, we have added two labels to designate bifacial request types. Thus, we have six types of RC intentions:

1. Repetition requests
2. Hearing checks
3. Understanding checks
4. Explanation requests
5. Repetition/explanation requests
6. HC/explanation requests

3.3.2 RC forms

RC forms can be classified in many ways, and the classification adopted will be heavily influenced by the nature of the data and the aims of the research. Thus, researchers have proposed different typologies of RC forms. For example, Schegloff, Jefferson and Sacks, who are concerned with 'repair' organisation in conversation, distinguish five RC forms in native-native spoken discourse:

1. Huh? and What
2. The question words 'Who', 'Where' and 'When'
3. Partial repeat of the trouble-source turn, plus a question word (e.g. 'All the what?').
4. Partial repeat of the trouble-source turn.
5. *Y'mean* plus a possible understanding of prior turn.

(Schegloff et al. 1977:367-368)

They claim that these RC forms 'have a natural ordering, based on their relative 'strength' or 'power' on such parameters as their capacity to 'locate' a repairable' (Schegloff et al. *ibid.*: 369, footnote). According to them the above arrangement is in order of increasing strength from 1 to 5.

Varonis and Gass (1985), who are primarily concerned with RC sequences in conversation between non-native speakers, present the following list of RC categories:

1. Explicit indication of non-understanding
ex. pardon?, what? I don't understand
2. Echo word or phrase from previous utterance
3. Non-verbal response
silence or mmmm
4. Summary
ex. Do you mean?
5. Surprise reaction
ex. Really? did she?
6. Inappropriate response
7. Overt correction

(Varonis and Gass 1985:77)⁴

None of the above classifications is satisfactory for an analysis of Japanese data which aims (1) to analyse the relationship between foreign speakers' proficiency level and their use of RCs and (2) to identify inappropriate RC forms in native-non-native conversation. We thus propose our own classification of RC forms based on two criteria.

The first criterion is whether or not an RC contains a main predicator, and if it does, what type of predicator this is. This criterion relates to the fact that main predicators appear at the end of a sentence in Japanese, and that this is the major position where politeness is expressed. Particular attention is paid to the politeness of RC expressions on the assumption that foreign speakers gain more control of politeness levels as their proficiency increases.

We have identified two RC predicator types in our data: **verb-type** and **copula-type**. Verb-type RCs contain a verb as the main predicator, and almost all verb-type RCs in our data are declarative sentences, as in (15.3) and (17.8), or imperative sentences, as in (18.2) below:

- | | | |
|--------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Example 15.3 | <i>wakarimasen</i> | I don't understand |
| Example 17.8 | <i>suimasen</i> | Sorry |
| Example 18.2 | <i>momoo ichido itte kudasai</i> | Would you say that again please? |

As we shall see later, verb-type RCs are very infrequent in native-native conversations, and the frequent use of this RC type may be marked as foreign.

Copula-type RCs are all interrogative sentences as in:

Example 12.2 *hooseki (is) commercial (desu ka)*
Does *hooseki* mean commercial?

Example 13.3 *igai tte ano- arubaito desu ka*
Apart from that? Do you mean part-time work?

desu is the polite form of the copula used in formal style speech, and in informal speech it is replaced by the plain form *da* or is simply dropped, resulting in what we here call the **zero-copula**. A considerable number of copula-type RCs in our data are of the zero-copula type and most of them are one-word utterances as in:

Example 19.2 *ima* Now?

Example 19.4 *lexicon* Lexicon?

Example 20.2 *donna* What sort of?

Example 20.4 *inshoo* Impression?

da is obligatorily deleted when used as a main predicator in yes/no questions. Note also that wh-questions of the form **question word** + *da* (e.g. as in *Itsu da* below, cf. also *Nan da* 'What?', *Dare da* 'Who?', etc.) are restricted to male speakers in highly informal situations:

Copula-type RCs		
Question type	Plain form	Polite form
Yes/no question	* <i>hon da?</i> <i>hon</i> [zero]	<i>hon desu ka</i>
Wh question	<i>itsu da?</i> <i>itsu</i> [zero]?	<i>itsu desuka</i>

In this study we thus divide copula-type RCs into two subtypes: polite copula-type (i.e. *desu* copula) and plain copula-type (i.e. *da* copula and zero copula).

In RCs any sentence-fragment may occur before *desu ka* or before the zero-copula: *kyoosoo suru desu ka* is perfectly correct if it means 'Did you say *kyoosoo suru*?', and in general terms, any kind of expression, if it is echoed (i.e. quoted), can occur as a zero-copula RC.

A further type of RC is here called the **incomplete-type**. Incomplete RCs are different from zero-copula RCs: they cannot be converted into polite sentences by the addition of *desu ka*, and thus cannot be regarded as syntactically complete sentences containing the plain zero form of the copula. Consider the following example:

Example 22

1. NS: .. *sore wa aru teido jikan ga tateba .. kaiketsu suru to omoimasu ká*
- 2. FS: *kaiketsu-* | *tte*
3. NS: | *kaiketsu e- ironna a- mondai ga nakunaru to omoimasu ká*
(N11-F304:49)
- 1' NS: Do you think, after a while, that to some extent you'll be able to resolve (the problem)?
- 2' FS: What does *kaiketsu* mean?
- 3' NS: *Kaiketsu* is ... do you think that the various problems will disappear?

(22.2) can be expanded to *kaiketsu tte nan desu ka* 'What does *kaiketsu* mean?', but not to **kaiketsu tte desu ka*. There are a number of possible RC expressions of this incomplete type:

<i>kaiketsu tte iu to</i>	What's <i>kaiketsu</i> ?
<i>kaiketsu tte iu no wa</i>	What's <i>kaiketsu</i> ?
<i>to iimasu to</i>	What do you mean by that?

Finally, the **interjection-type** RC is formally the simplest type. *é* in (9.3) is an example of this type. Interjections such as *é*, *uń*, *há*, etc. are extensively used as RCs in native-native conversation, and their frequency and forms seem to be good indicator of the corrective competence of foreign speakers.

We have now distinguished five RC types on the basis of the first formal criterion (predicator type):

1. Verb-type
2. Copula-type
 - 2a. Polite copula (*desu*)
 - 2b. Plain copula (*da* and zero)
3. Incomplete-type
4. Interjection-type

The second criterion is whether or not an RC repeats any element in the trigger. This criterion is adopted on the assumption that foreign speakers will become more able to repeat part or whole of native speakers' utterances as their proficiency level becomes higher. On the basis of this criterion all RCs are either **echo-type** or **non-echo-type**. The echo-type RC repeats or attempts to repeat the whole or part of the preceding utterance. It may simply repeat and add nothing to it; or it may add some other element to the echoed part. This criterion partially cross-cuts the first: clearly, however, the echo/non-echo dichotomy does not apply to interjective RCs.

In this section we have introduced two classificatory criteria, and distinguished nine types of RC forms:

I. Verb-type

Echo	<i>*kaiketsu wa wakarimasen</i> (I don't understand <i>kaiketsu</i>)
Non-echo	<i>wakarimasen</i> (15.3) (I don't understand)

II. Polite copula-type

Echo	<i>kinchoo wa nan desu ka</i> (14.2) (What does <i>kinchoo</i> mean?)
Non-echo	<i>*ima desu ka</i> (Do you mean 'now'?)

III. Plain copula-type

Echo	<i>inshoo</i> (20.4) What's <i>inshoo</i> ?
Non-echo	<i>ima</i> (19.2) Do you mean 'now'?

IV. Incomplete-type

Echo	<i>kaiketsu tte</i> (22.2) What does <i>kaiketsu</i> mean?
Non-echo	<i>*to osshaimasu to</i> What do you mean?

V. Interjection-type

e (9.3)
What did you say?

(Asterisks mark constructed examples)

3.3.3 RC referents

RCs fall into two types in terms of their referent: i.e. whether they refer to a particular part or to the whole of the trigger. They are referred to as **specific RCs** and **global RCs**, respectively. Thus, confirmation requests are specific RCs, while interjections and such forms as *Moo ichido* 'Pardon', *Wakarimasen* 'I don't quite understand' are examples of global RCs. This criterion is treated as minor in this study, and is only mentioned where it is particularly relevant to the discussion.

3.4 Summary

In this chapter we have defined Requests for Clarification (RCs), and briefly described the typical organisation of RC sequences. We have distinguished simple and complex RC sequences, and introduced such terms as 'trigger', 'RC invitation' and 'corrective utterance'. This chapter has also presented a typology of RCs based on three classificatory criteria: RC intentions, RC forms and RC referents.

NOTES

1. The listener may use an RC expression for other purposes when he has no problem in understanding:

Husband: *chotto jisho totte.* Get me the dictionary.

Wife: *un?* What?

Husband: *ii yo.* It's okay.

Here, the wife may have used the RC expression as a delaying tactic. If this is the case, then it is not an RC.

2. It should be noted that, strictly speaking, the term feedback here refers only to verbal feedback, and verbal feedback is indeed optional in an RC exchange. However, the speaker who has issued a correction normally requires some sign of understanding from the listener, whether verbally or nonverbally.
3. The term 'move' is derived from Sinclair and Coulthard (1975:21), who devise a rank-scale model to describe classroom discourse. In this model the minimum unit of interaction is called an 'exchange', which in turn consists of at least two 'moves' contributed by different speakers. Thus, the following example has two exchanges with four moves.

A: Are you going	MOVE	} EXCHANGE
B: Yeah.	MOVE	
How about you?	MOVE	} EXCHANGE
A: I'm go, too.	MOVE	

4. This classification of RC forms is not totally clear. Inappropriate responses (type 6) indicate misunderstanding but on our definition do not constitute RCs as such. 'Overt correction' (type 7) is only possible if the listener is certain of his interpretation and thus cannot be an RC.

Chapter 4

RCs IN NATIVE-NATIVE CONVERSATION

This chapter aims at discovering how native speakers of Japanese make use of RCs in the face of communication breakdowns in talking with other native speakers. We believe that RCs used by foreign speakers in contact situations can be studied in their own right, but that further insight can be gained from comparisons of RCs from native situations with those used by foreign speakers.

4.1 Data

The data analysed for this purpose are derived from transcripts of natural discourse presented in the *Rokuonki* column of the journal *Gengo Seikatsu* from 1969 to 1982 (Nos. 208-373). Though we were unable to check details against the original audio-tapes, the transcripts can be taken as representing spoken Japanese fairly accurately for our purposes, although pauses and intonation markers are not generally indicated. Despite these limitations we were able to identify 92 relatively clear cases of RCs uttered by adult native speakers in the *Gengo Seikatsu* sample. RCs issued by children were excluded.

The 92 RCs are not directly comparable to the RCs used by foreign speakers in our data since the *Rokuonki* columns cover a wide range of discourse types in many different situations whereas our data is derived from rather formal interview-type situations. We have, therefore, divided the RCs into two broad groups according to the formality of the speech style used. Group I consists of RCs issued by speakers who primarily use 'polite' style speech (the *desu/masu* style), and RCs which are themselves plain in form (e.g. *Nani* 'What?') are included in Group I as long as they are uttered by the *desu/masu* style speakers. RCs in Group II are issued by speakers using 'plain' style speech. We shall call Group I RCs 'formal style RCs', and Group II RCs 'informal style RCs'.

4.2 RCs and face

An RC is potentially a 'face threatening act' (Goffman 1963; Brown and Levinson 1978); it is a manifestation of inability to comprehend an utterance, and at the same time it can be seen as a reproach to the speaker for failing to communicate clearly. In addition, an RC sequence stops the flow of conversation; it does not contribute to the development of the topic. From this point of view, in principle an RC is something to be avoided.

However, there is also an opposing principle which works against RC avoidance strategies. The maxim of relevance, one of the four maxims of conversation falling under the heading of the co-operative principle as formulated by Grice (1975:45), stipulates 'Make your contributions relevant'. In conversation, where the participants alternate their speaking turns, a contribution must be coherent with the preceding turn. In order to conform to this maxim, the speaker must thus gain a certain degree of understanding of the preceding discourse in order to be able to make a relevant contribution. Thus, because of the constraint imposed by the maxim, an RC is not always avoidable.

Where an RC is unavoidable, it must be made less face-threatening, particularly in situations where politeness is a major concern. From this point of view, RCs caused by hearing problems (i.e. repetition requests and hearing checks) are less threatening than those caused by understanding problems, since hearing problems are in general attributable to physical or psychological noise rather than to disparities in linguistic competence and general knowledge. The listener in a formal situation may well be unwilling to issue any kind of RC, but it seems likely that he will be less reluctant to use repetition requests and hearing checks than explanation requests and understanding checks.

Politeness is also relevant to the question of who initiates a correction process with reference to whose utterance. Schegloff, Jefferson and Sacks (1977) distinguish **self-** and **other-** varieties of **initiation** and **correction**. In their framework, repetition requests and explanation requests are seen as involving the initiation of a correction process by the hearer (**other-initiation**) and lead to correction by the speaker of his own utterance (**self-correction**). They also regard our understanding checks as involving other-initiation (cf. their example (39), *ibid.*:368). However, it is reasonable to argue that confirmation requests or checks (i.e. hearing checks and understanding checks) in fact involve **self-initiation** for **other-correction**, since checks presuppose a certain degree of hearing or understanding and present a specific element or proposition to be confirmed or denied by the original speaker. In the case of checks, the speaker asks for correction of his own utterance, whereas requests (i.e. repetition requests and explanation requests) demand correction of the other speaker's utterance. Thus, we argue that in terms of politeness, checks are less demanding and threatening than requests.

Similarly, a specific explanation request which points to a particular element to be clarified is less disruptive, and thus less threatening, than a global explanation request which expresses total incomprehension.

In summary, from the point of view of politeness, (1) repetition requests and hearing checks are preferable to understanding checks and explanation requests; (2) checks are preferable to requests; and (3) specific explanation requests are preferable to global explanation requests. On this basis we may hypothesise a face-threatening hierarchy as follows:

1. Global explanation requests (most threatening)
2. Specific explanation requests
3. Understanding checks

4. Repetition requests
5. Hearing checks (least threatening)

Note that in the present perspective bifacial RCs can be regarded as attempts to avoid explicit explanation requests. The listener in a formal situation attempts to use less face-threatening RCs or to employ RC avoidance strategies. When he faces a problem of total incomprehension, he may refrain from issuing a global explanation request such as *Chotto wakaranai n desu ga* 'I don't quite understand' and instead utter *Haa* 'Huh?', which allows the interpretation that he has merely a hearing problem. In the same way, in order to avoid a specific explanation request (e.g. *Hatsuon wa nan desu ka* 'What's *hatsuon*?'), the listener may issue a bifacial RC such as *Hatsuon desu ka* which is interpretable as a hearing check (i.e. 'Did you say *hatsuon*?') or an explanation request (i.e. 'What's *hatsuon*?').

On the basis of the discussion so far, we may predict in particular that the relative frequency of explanation requests, as the most face-threatening RCs, will be lower in formal situations than in informal situations, and that the relative frequency of understanding checks and bifacial requests will be higher in formal situations.

4.3 RC intentions

Tables 4.1 and 4.2 present the breakdown of formal and informal style RCs respectively in terms of inferred RC intentions and RC forms. We shall first examine RC intentions.

Table 4.1: Formal style RCs (Group I)						
Inferred RC intention	Copula		Incomplete	Inter- jection	Total	%
	Polite	Plain				
Understanding checks	8	4	1	-	13	(33.3)
Explanation requests	6	-	2	-	8	(20.5)
Rep/explanation requests	1	-	-	5	6	(15.4)
HC/explanation requests	-	5	-	-	5	(12.8)
Repetition requests	2	-	-	4	6	(15.4)
Hearing checks	1	-	-	-	1	(2.6)
Total %	18 (46.2)	9 (23.1)	3 (7.7)	9 (23.1)	39 (100.1)	(100.0)

Table 4.2: Informal style RCs (Group II)

RC form Inferred RC intention	Copula		Incomplete	Inter- jection	Total	%
	Polite	Plain				
Understanding checks	-	13	-	-	13	(24.5)
Explanation requests	-	10	6	-	16	(30.2)
Rep/explanation requests	-	-	-	8	8	(15.1)
HC/explanation requests	-	1	-	-	1	(1.9)
Repetition requests	-	2	-	13	15	(28.3)
Hearing checks	-	-	-	-	-	
Total %	-	26 (49.1)	6 (11.3)	21 (39.6)	53 (100)	(100.0)

4.3.1 Understanding checks and explanation requests

Table 4.1 shows that the understanding check is the most frequent type (33.3%) of RC in Group I (formal style) RCs followed by the explanation request (20.5%). In the case of Group II (informal style) RCs (Table 4.2), however, the figures are 30.2% for explanation requests and 24.5% for understanding checks. These figures support our predication that in formal situations the understanding check should be preferred to the explanation request.

As shown in Table 4.3, global explanation requests such as *Wakarimasen* 'I don't understand', *Doo iu koto* 'What do you mean?', etc. are generally avoided in both styles.

Table 4.3: Specificity of explanation requests			
Style	Specific RCs	Global RCs	Total
Formal (Group I RCs)	7	1	8
Informal (Group II RCs)	14	2	16

The single formal global explanation request is cited below:

Example 1

A (a resident in a ward in Tokyo) is talking to B (A public servant in the ward office) on the phone.

1. A: *a moshimoshi sakihodo odenwa shimashita A desu kedo ne soomu ni kikimashitara ne kachookai tte iu no wa mada motarete inai tte iu koto desu kedo doo iu koto nan desu ka*
- 2. B: *chotto ohanashi no*
3. A: *a naiyoo ga wakarimasen ka sakihodo no kata ja nai to omoimasu kedo*
4. B: *hai?*
5. A: *ano ne kachoosan o onegaishiyoo to omotta n desu*

(Gengo Seikatu, No.211, 1960)

- '1 A: Hello, I'm Mr A who phoned a short while ago. I inquired at the General Affairs Office, and they said the meeting of Departments hasn't been held yet. What's going on there?
- 2' B: Sorry, I don't ...
- 3' A: Oh, you don't know what I'm referring to? I don't think you're the person I was speaking with a little while ago.
- 4' B: Pardon?
- 5' A: I really would like to speak with the head of this department.

(1.2) is a global explanation: speaker B does not understand what speaker A is talking about. *Chotto* 'a little', when accompanied by hesitant tone, often signals that the utterance is negative in meaning. In (1.4) speaker B also issues the repetition/explanation request *Hai?*. Although this interjection is classified as a bifacial request, it is almost certain here that B faces an understanding problem but avoids issuing a further explicit explanation request. This excerpt suggests that speaker B is reluctant to use a global explanation request, and that when he does so, in (1.2), he does so hesitantly.

The two informal-style global explanation requests occurred when four men were playing mahjong. The first is presented below.

Example 2

1. B: *shikashi atsui desu naa taiyoo ga sansan to tette ite*
2. D: *hontoo ni taiyoo ga futatsu mo detemasu ne*
3. B&C: *e?*
- 4. A: *nandaisoryaa*
5. D: *san san desu yo* (great laughter)
6. A: *orea mada wakaran zoo* (laughter)

(Gengo Seikatsu, No.252, 1972)

- 1' B: It's hot isn't it? The sun is really shining brightly.
 2' D: Yes. In fact, there are two suns.
 3' B&C: What?
 -4' A: Wad'ya mean?
 5' D: Sun sun, you know. (great laughter)
 6' A: I've got still no idea what you're on about (laughter)

(2.2) is a riddle. None of the three listeners understand it. B and C issue the repetition/explanation request *e?* and A uses the global explanation request *Nan dai soryaa* 'What does that mean?'.

Note that, by uttering a riddle, speaker D here expressly intends to puzzle his listeners. He expects an RC, and in such a context a global explanation request is quite appropriate.¹ The second example was also issued in response to a similar riddle. In this respect, the figures in Table 4.3 support the face-threatening hierarchy hypothesised in the previous section.

A further related point is that Group II contains two cases of explanation requests immediately followed by understanding checks.

Example 3

1. A: *sorede ima- ine wa dore dake tsukutteru n*
 2. B: *nani-*
 3. A: *nantanguree tsukutterun*
 -4. B: *dare? ootoko?*
 5. A: *u-n*

(*Gengo Seikatsu*, No.360, 1081)

- 1' A: How much land do you now use for rice-farming?
 2' B: What?
 3' A: How many acres do you use for rice?
 -4' B: Who? Me?
 5' A: Yeah.

The formal style version of (3.4) would literally be *Dare desu ka. Uchi desu ka* 'Who? Me?', but in fact this combination of RCs seems likely to occur in formal conversation: native speakers would probably issue an understanding check alone. In support of this observation, there is not a single instance of such a combination of RCs in Group I.

4.3.2 Repetition/explanation requests

We have seen that global explanation requests are in general avoided both in formal and informal style speech. Even in informal situations RCs like *Nan dai soryaa* 'What do you mean?' in (2.4) sound too direct under normal circumstances. However, situations where the listener faces problems of total incomprehension do arise, and in such situations he may use interjections such as *e*, *un* and *haa* by way of camouflage. There is a close correlation of intention and form here: five out of six repetition/explanation requests in Group I are of the interjection-type, and in Group II all eight repetition/explanation requests are of this type.

4.3.3 HC/explanation requests

HC/explanation requests by definition repeat some part of the preceding utterance and do not overtly indicate what kind of response they expect. A corrective response to this type of RC can be either an affirmative reply ('yes') or an explanation of the initial trouble-source utterance. One example of this request type is illustrated below:

Example 4

A: a farmer; B: a visitor from Tokyo

1. A: *noodoo tsukuttari sutto doo shitemo kusa mo sukunaku nan nae*
- 2. B: *noodoo.....?*
3. A: *n da noodoo tochikairyoojigyoo de atarashiku tsukutta michi wa noodoo tte iu n da*
(*Gengo Seikatsu*, No.241, 1971)
- 1' A: When you make a *noodoo* grass gets scarce.
- 2' B: *noodoo*
- 3' A: Right. *Noodoo*. A newly constructed road under the farm land rationalisation project is called a *noodoo*.

Speaker B here is probably faced with an understanding problem with the word *noodoo*. Since the precise intention behind the echo-type RC in (4.2) cannot be ascertained, however, it is classified as a HC/explanation request. Note that speaker B does not issue an explicit explanation request such as *Noodoo to iu no wa nan desu ka* 'What does *noodoo* mean?' or *Noodoo tte?* 'What's *noodoo*?', but prefers to use the present RC, probably to show deference. The dots and question mark in (4.2) which often imply hesitation support this view. We are not arguing that HC/explanation requests are always used for politeness, but it is of interest to see that three out of the five HC/explanation requests in Group I are accompanied by some signs of hesitation.

We have indicated that, where possible, an ambiguous HC/explanation request is preferred over an explicit explanation request in formal situations. But in order to verify this assumption we need to examine the explanation requests in some detail. Global explanation requests such as (1.2) and

(2.4) cited earlier clearly cannot be replaced by HC/explanation requests. However, RCs like (5.2) below could easily be so rephrased:

Example 5

A: male in his 40s; K: female architect

1. A: *mondai wa sono kyookai rinsetsu no kyookai ga dono gurai na no ka yoku wakaranai monodesukara*
- 2. K: *rinsetsu no kyookai to iimasu to*
3. A: *hai tatoeba koko no aida desu ne*
4. K: *a tatemono to ikutsu akenakya ikenai to itta*
5. A: *soo desu kyookai soo desu*

(Gengo Seikatsu, No.357, 1981)

- 1' A: The problem is I don't know the size of the space between the two properties.
- 2' K: What do you mean by *rinsetsu no kyookai*?
- 3' A: For example, the space here.
- 4' K: Oh, you have to leave a certain amount of space between buildings? Is that what you mean?
- 5' A: Yes, that's it.

(5.2) is a clear explanation request, but it could have been formulated as an HC/explanation request, i.e. as *rinsetsu no kyookai*. In the case of Group I RCs (Table 4.1), there are a total of eight explanation requests, of which four are rephrasable as HC/explanation requests like (5.2). Similarly, six out of the 16 explanation requests in Group II RCs (Table 4.2) are rephrasable as HC/explanation requests. Thus we will have the following table.

Table 4.4		
	Group I	Group II
No. of explanation requests rephrasable as HC/explanation requests	4	6
No. of HC/explanation requests actually issued	5	1
Total:	9	7

In the Group I data there are thus at least nine contexts in which an echo-type HC/explanation request could have been issued, and five RCs in these contexts are in fact of the bifacial type. In contrast, there is only one HC/explanation request issued in informal style out of a total of seven potential contexts. This indeed suggests that Japanese native speakers are most likely to issue HC/explanation requests in formal than in informal style, and that they tend to issue explanation requests more readily in informal style.

4.3.4 Repetition requests and hearing checks

Hearing problems frequently arise when conversations are conducted on the telephone, in the train, in the street or in other noisy situations. Sakaguchi (1983), who analyses telephone conversations between native speakers, reports that 34 out of the 41 RCs in his data are repetition requests. Conversationalists are not directly responsible for physical noise, and therefore repetition requests are accepted as unavoidable regardless of situational formality.

Native speakers, particularly when using informal style speech, prefer interjections as repetition requests. In Table 4.2, 13 out of the 15 repetition requests are interjections (86.7%). This is also true, though to a lesser extent, for formal style. In Table 4.1, there are six repetition requests, of which four are of the interjection-type (66.7%). This strong tendency corresponds to Sakaguchi's findings (*ibid.*): 29 out of the 34 repetition requests in his data are of the interjective type.

Interjective RCs are necessarily global, and do not specify any particular element to be repeated. Specific repetition requests, on the other hand, pinpoint the element(s) which have caused the hearing problem. In the *Gengo Seikatsu* sample, all repetition requests are of the global type except for the single instance presented below:

Example 6

A male speaker (A) is answering a telephone enquiry from a woman (B).

1. A: *e-basu ga arimasu kara[hai] sono basu desu ne kogasaki iku basu ga arimasu kara*
- 2. B: *naniyukidesuka?*
3. A: *kogasaki iki [nan desu ka] kogasaki*
4. B: *togasaki desuka*
5. A: *haihai*

(*Gengo Seikatsu*, No.283, 1975)

- 1' A: Yes, there is a bus. That bus ... there is a bus that goes to Kogasaki.
- 2' B: Where does it go?
- 3' A: To [What did you say?] Kogasaki.
- 4' B: Was that *Togasaki*?
- 5' A: Yes, that's right.

Speaker B here faces a problem in hearing the place name *kogasaki*, which she knows to be the destination of the bus, and *nani* 'what' in (6.2) specifies the destination to be repeated.

The frequency of hearing checks is the lowest of all RC types. In fact (6.4) above is the only example of this type identified in the *Gengo Seikatsu* sample. This low frequency is due to the fact that the use of hearing checks is contextually restricted. A hearing check is directed to an element which the speaker understands; if he does not, the RC is to be classified as either an explanation request or an HC/explanation request. Thus, a hearing check in effect is issued only when the speaker is concerned about the pronunciation of an element. In (6.4), speaker B wishes to make sure of her hearing of the place name. Hearing checks are typically issued in reference to proper nouns, expressions of time, dates and numbers.

4.4 RC forms

This section discusses the strategic use of RC forms in connection with politeness. In Chapter 3 we distinguished five major RC forms: verbal, polite-copula, plain-copula, incomplete and interjective. In the *Gengo Seikatsu* sample, however, verbal RCs such as *Wakarimasen* 'I don't understand', *Moo ichido itte kudasai* 'Would you say that again, please?' are not present. Thus, we shall discuss the other four types in this section. Table 4.5 below presents the frequency of these RC forms.

Table 4.5			
	Group I Formal RCs		Group II Informal RCs
Polite copula-type RCs	18	(46.2%)	0 (0%)
Plain copula-type RCs	9	(23.1%)	26 (49.1%)
Incomplete-type RCs	3	(7.7%)	6 (11.3%)
Interjective type	9	(23.1%)	21 (39.6%)
Total	39	(100.1%)	53 (100.0%)

4.4.1 Copula-type RCs

We note first that there is not a single case of a polite copula-type RC in Group II: the table clearly indicates that such RCs do not occur in informal speech. In formal style speech, on the other hand, both polite and plain copula-type RCs are found. In this section, we focus on the question of why native speakers mix the two types in this way.

Table 4.1 shows that there are nine plain copula-type RCs (four understanding checks and five HC/explanation requests). These are all of the zero-copula-type. We shall first consider the four understanding checks, one of which is presented below.

Example 7

A (a man from Tokyo) is talking to B (a live-in maid) at a Japanese inn in Yamagata.

1. B: *moo ninensei ni mo naru to dame desu ne*
- 2. A: *ninensei shoogakkono*
3. B: *ee*

(*Gengo Seikatsu*, No.248, 1972)

- 1' B: Once children go up to second year, they are not good.
- 2' A: Do you mean second year of primary school?
- 3' B: Yes, that's right.

(7.2) is the zero-copula version of the polite copula-type RC *shoogakko no desu ka*.

Most native speakers of Japanese will agree that confirmation requests ending in *desu ka* are politer than those without it. Nevertheless, this does not preclude them from occasionally using informal utterances in formal situations (Ikuta 1983). Neustupný (1983) points out that native speakers of Japanese employ various strategies to control politeness and argues that honorific avoidance is one important strategy for maintaining smooth communication. Copula deletion in copula-type understanding checks may be motivated to reduce politeness. In this regard, it is worth noting that all four zero-type understanding checks are issued by speakers who have good reason to use these less formal RCs: a guest from Tokyo speaking to a female employee at an inn (example (7)), a customer to a salesman, a white-collar worker to a farmer who spoke plain style Japanese, and a young man to his friend's fiancée. It seems likely that these speakers employ copula deletion to reduce the politeness level in these situations so as to create friendliness and intimacy.

In relation to politeness, the important role of intonation must also be considered. In the case of confirmation requests, a final rising intonation is more forceful, insisting on a reply from the listener. A non-rising intonation, on the other hand, sounds as if the speaker anticipates an affirmative reply or even as if he is talking to himself. In either case, a non-rising intonation renders confirmation requests more reserved and less demanding, and makes them sound like acknowledgement feedback. This means that native speakers can reduce the politeness level by means of copula deletion and still avoid issuing over-casual RCs by controlling intonation.

There are five zero-copula-type HC/explanation requests in Group I (Table 4.1), and as already reported in 4.3.3, three are accompanied by some signs of hesitation. Let us compare the following two zero-copula-type RCs:

Example 4 (cited again for ease of reference)

2. B: *noodoo.....?*

Example 8

A: a farmer; B: a visitor from Tokyo

1. A: *momo de iu to anta mutaisaibai tte iu kotoba shittekkae*
- 2. B: *mutaisaibai?*
3. A: *soo da mutaisaibai ... mutaisaibai ttee no wa nae momo sa fukuro kakenee de momo dekkakusuttettae*
4. B: *haa*

(Gengo Seikatsu, No.241, 1971)

- 1' A: Take peaches for instance. Do you know the word *mutaisaibai*?
- 2' B: *Mutaisaibai?*
- 3' A: Yeah, *mutaisaibai*. It means that you grow peaches without using bags to protect each fruit.
- 4' B: I see.

The dots following *noodoo* in (4.2) are significant here. They indicate hesitation on the part of the speaker. In contrast, *Mutaisaibai?* in (8.2) appears to be pronounced without hesitation. *Mutaisaibai?*, if pronounced with sharp rising intonation as indicated by the transcript, sounds even less polite than *Mutaisaibai tte nan desu ka*. These two RCs were issued by the same speaker in the same conversation, and it may be that the speaker uttered (8.2) spontaneously without paying attention to politeness. Whatever the reason, the intonational contour makes the RC less formal.

A further related point is that prolongation with a dangling tone tends to be interpreted as a sign of non-understanding. RCs such as (4.2) are thus more likely to elicit an explanation than those with sharp rising intonation like (8.2). Native speakers use HC/explanation requests to avoid explicit explanation requests, but at the same time they also wish to convey their understanding problems.

Plain copula-type RCs are either of the *da*-copula or zero-copula-type. We have already reported that all plain copula-type RCs in Group I are of the zero-copula-type. Out of the 26 plain copula-type RCs in Group II only three are of the *da*-copula-type: *Nan dai sorryaa* 'What's that?' in (2.4) is one example. This low frequency of *da*-copula-type RCs is partly accounted for by the syntactic constraint explained in 3.3.2 (i.e. *da* cannot be used as the main predicator in confirmation requests). It is also due to the fact that *da*-copula-type RCs are very informal: female speakers of standard Japanese normally use only zero-copula-type RCs, and they are not often used even by men unless the situation is very informal. The three *da*-copula-type RCs in the

Gengo Seikatsu sample are all issued by male speakers to another male speaker. Thus, it can be argued that the zero-copula is the unmarked variant in informal RCs, *da* being used to show masculinity and greater informality.

4.4.2 Incomplete-type RCs

Table 4.1 shows that there are three incomplete RCs in the formal style, of which two are explanation requests. These are cited again below:

Example (1.2) *chotto ohanashi no*

Example (5.2) *rinsetsu no kyookai to iimasu to*

These RCs are equivalent to the following:

Example (1.2') *chotto ohanashi no naiyoo ga yoku wakaranai n desu ga, doo iu koto desu ka*

Example (5.2') *rinsetsu no kyookai to iimasu to doo iu koto desu ka*

These syntactically complete copula-type explanation requests are too explicit, and consequently less polite than the incomplete-types. It seems that the native speakers use these incomplete RCs to invite interruption from the other speaker, and thus avoid completing the sentences.

It should be clearly noted that (1.2) and (5.2) cannot be derived by deleting *desu ka* from (1.2') and (5.2'), and are thus not zero-copula RCs. Deleting *desu ka* from (1.2') and (5.2') yields highly informal explanation requests.² In general, the deletion of *desu ka* produces excessively informal RCs if applied to explanation requests: such RCs as *Nani* 'What?', *Doko* 'Where?', *Doo iu koto* 'What do you mean?' and the like are very informal, and such zero-copula-type explanation requests do not occur in Group I RCs. On the contrary, (1.2) and (5.2) do not contain a question word. Note furthermore that a falling intonation (which, in the case of confirmation requests, produces a positive politeness effect) does not seem to weaken the elicitation force of question words and may even be interpreted as a sign of irritation or indignation in such cases.

There are six incomplete RCs in Group II (Table 4.2), of which five end with *tte* or *tte iu no wa*:

Example 9

A young man (B) and a woman (A) who appear to be university students are talking.

1. A: *kekkyoku ano hitotachi to onaji ni natchau*
- 2. B: *ano hitotachi tte iu no wa*
3. A: *XXX too*
4. B: *a- soo ka*

(*Gengo Seikatsu*, No.227, 1970)

- 1' A: In the long run, we'll end up the same as them.
 -2' B: Who do you mean by 'them'?
 3' A: The XXX party.
 4' B: Oh, I see what you mean.

It seems that the *tte* ending is the typical form of explanation requests in informal style speech. In this style, incomplete explanation requests are almost as common as zero-copula-type explanation requests.

We have reported that native speakers often use reduced RC forms (i.e. zero-copula-type and incomplete type RCs), and argued that in formal speech zero-copula-type understanding checks are primarily used for reducing the politeness level, whereas incomplete explanation requests are intended to raise politeness. We have also emphasised the importance of intonation, and argued that a sharp rising intonation tends to be interpreted as a confirmation request and a dangling tone as a sign of understanding problems.

4.4.3 Interjective RCs

The high frequency of interjective RCs in native-native conversations is conspicuous. Sakaguchi (1983) reports an extremely high frequency of interjections (29/41:70.7%)

There are largely four kinds of interjections and their use is also sensitive to the formality of a given situation. Table 4.6 below presents the forms in relation to formality.

Table 4.6		
Interjection type	Group I Formal RCs	Group II Informal RCs
1. <i>a-</i> , <i>an</i>	-	2
2. <i>un</i>	-	8
3. <i>e-</i>	3	11
4. <i>ha</i>	6	-
Total	9	21

Table 4.6, together with my informal observation of native-native conversations, confirms that the *ha*-type is typically used in formal situations and *un* in informal situations. The *e* type can be used in both situations, but is much less formal than *ha*. *A-* and *an* were used solely by a man aged about 60 in Ishikawa prefecture (*Gengo Seikatsu*, No.335, 1979), and do not seem to be common, at least in the Tokyo area.

It is worth noting that 11 of the 30 interjective RCs are classified as repetition/explanation requests. As already mentioned, native speakers issue interjective RCs even when they are aware that the real problem is not hearing but understanding.

4.5 Summary

We have examined 92 RCs identified in the Gengo Seikatsu sample in an attempt to discover how native speakers of Japanese use RCs in native-native conversations. The major points may be summarised as follows:

1. The understanding check is the major request type in formal situations, while in informal situations the explanation is the major type.
2. Regardless of situational formality, global explanation requests such as *Wakaranai n desu ga* 'I don't understand', *Doo iu koto desu ka* 'What do you mean?' are not favoured. Native speakers tend to issue a repetition/explanation request, often realised by an interjection, to avoid a global explanation request.
3. Native speakers use HC/explanation requests more frequently in formal situations than in informal situations. This is partly explained as an attempt to avoid explicit explanation requests.
4. Native speakers use zero-type RCs to create intimacy in formal situations: in effect *desu ka* deletion is applied to confirmation requests for this purpose. The same deletion process applied to explanation requests produces over-casual RCs and is therefore avoided in formal situations.
5. Native speakers in formal situations use incomplete RCs to show deference.
6. *PQ tte* 'What's PQ?' (and its variants) is the most common form of incomplete RC in informal style speech.
7. Verb-type RCs such as *Moo ichido itte kudasai* 'Would you say that again, please?', *Yoku kikoenai n desu ga* 'I can't hear you', *Chotto wakaranai n desu ga* 'I don't quite understand' are seldom used either in formal or informal situations.
8. The interjection *un* is not used in formal situations while *haa* is not used in informal situations.

NOTES

1. Garvey (1977) distinguishes solicited and unsolicited contingent queries as exemplified below:
 1. A: I like it.
 - B: What? [Unsolicited contingent query]
 - A: I like it.
 - B: Oh, do you?

2. A: You know what?
B: What? [Solicited contingent query]
A: I like it.
B: Oh, do you?

In these terms, example (2.4) resembles a solicited contingent query.

2. Deleting the final *desu ka* from (1.2') and (5.2') in fact yields stylistically incoherent utterance because they violate the principle 'change all predicators into informal forms if the main predicator is informal'.

Chapter 5

RCs ISSUED BY FOREIGN SPEAKERS

This chapter examines RCs issued by foreign speakers in contact situations. It attempts to answer the following two questions:

- (1) Is it the case that RCs used by foreign speakers become more like those of native speakers as their proficiency in Japanese increases?
- (2) Are there any RCs used by foreign speakers which appear to be seldom used by native speakers and thus can be regarded as foreign?

In our interview data we have identified 179 conversational turns in which foreign speakers attempt to solve comprehension problems. Since four of the turns consist of two RCs each (e.g. *e nan desu ka* is composed of *e* 'Huh?' and *nan desu ka* 'What did you say?'), the total of RCs in our data is 183. Table 5.1 presents the breakdown of the RCs in terms of proficiency levels, and also indicates their frequency of occurrence.

Table 5.1		
Proficiency levels	Number of RCs	Frequency per minute
I	113	0.58
II	40	0.33
III	14	0.11
IV	16	0.10
Total:	183	Average: 0.30

Precise frequency comparisons for different levels cannot be made because the quantity of the native speakers' speech has not been measured. However, the table seems to support what common sense would lead us to expect: lower level learners produce more RCs than higher level learners.

Proficiency is of course not the only factor. Correction strategies are also relevant. Many foreign speakers reported that they attempted to avoid issuing RCs: they tried to guess the meaning of words and phrases, or they simply pretended to understand what had been said. This avoidance phenomenon will be dealt with in Chapter 7. It will be sufficient at this point to note that some foreign speakers issue RCs more readily than others.

The native speakers' correction strategies also appear to affect the foreign speakers' comprehension. Many native speakers in our data spoke Japanese with some traits of so-called 'foreigner talk' (Ferguson 1971; Skoutarides 1981, 1986). It is not certain to what extent this simplified register assists comprehension, but slow delivery and clear articulation, commonly found in the interviews of lower level learners, are certainly helpful for them. If the native speakers had spoken in a more natural manner, the number of RCs would have doubtless been much higher. There are also some native speakers who appear to employ a strategy of avoiding the use of English equivalents in response to RCs from foreign interlocutors. This strategy caused repeated use of RCs.

Table 5.2 presents the breakdown of the 183 RCs in terms of RC intentions and forms. In what follows, we shall first contrast RCs of level I learners with those of level IV learners in relation to those used by native speakers in formal situations (Table 4.1). Table 5.3 presents the overview of the RCs used by these groups.

Table 5.2: RCs issued by foreign speakers						
<div>RC forms</div> <div>Inferred Rc intention</div>	Verbal	Copula		Incomplete	Inter-jective	Total
		Polite	Plain			
Understanding checks	1	6	12	2	-	21 (11.5)
Explanation requests	17	8	1	6	1	33 (18.0)
Rep/explanation requests	15	2	38	2	12	69 (37.7)
HC/explanation requests	-	3	40	-	-	43 (23.5)
Repetition requests	-	2	5	-	2	9 (4.9)
Hearing checks	1	1	6	-	-	8 (4.4)
Total	34 (18.6)	22 (12.0)	102 (55.7)	10 (5.5)	15 (8.2)	183 (100.0) (100.0)

Table 5.3: RCs issued by levels I, IV and native speakers																		
RC form Level Inferred RC intention	Verbal			Copula						Incomplete			Interjection			Total		
				Polite			Plain											
	FS I	FS IV	FS	FS I	FS IV	NS	FS I	FS IV	NS	FS I	FS IV	NS	FS I	FS IV	NS	FS I	FS IV	NS
Understanding Checks	-	-	-	1	5	8	7	-	4	-	1	1	-	-	-	8 (7.1)	6 (37.5)	13 (33.3)
Explanation requests	12	-	-	2	1	6	-	-	-	4	-	2	-	-	-	18 (15.9)	1 (6.3)	8 (20.5)
Rep/explanation requests	12	-	-	-	-	1	28	2	-	-	-	-	8	2	5	48 (42.5)	4 (25.0)	6 (15.4)
HC/explanation requests	-	-	-	-	2	-	30	1	5	-	-	-	-	-	-	30 (26.5)	3 (18.8)	5 (12.8)
Repetition requests	-	-	-	-	1	2	4	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	4	4 (3.5)	2 (12.5)	6 (15.4)
Hearing checks	1	-	-	-	-	1	4	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	5 (4.4)	-	1 (2.6)
Total	25 (22.1)	-	-	3 (2.7)	9 (56.3)	18 (46.2)	73 (64.6)	3 (18.8)	9 (23.1)	4 (3.5)	1 (6.3)	3 (7.7)	8 (7.1)	3 (18.8)	9 (23.1)	113	16	39

N.B. Figures in parentheses indicate percentages.

5.1 RC Intentions

We shall first examine the four request types which are or may be caused by understanding problems, disregarding as less significant the remaining two types which originate from hearing problems. Table 5.4 below summarises the differences in the frequency of these four types between level I and native speakers on one hand and between level IV and native speakers on the other.

Table 5.4: Frequency of four request types used by levels I, IV and native speakers			
RC Intention	FS I	Native Speakers	Difference
Understanding checks	7.1%	33.3%	26.2%
Explanation requests	15.9	20.5	4.6
Rep/explanation requests	42.5	15.4	27.1
HC/explanation requests	26.5	12.8	13.7
Total No. of RCs:	104	32	

RC Intention	FS IV	Native Speakers	Difference
Understanding checks	37.5%	33.3%	4.2%
Explanation requests	6.3	20.5	14.2
Rep/explanation requests	25.0	15.4	9.6
HC/explanation requests	18.8	12.8	6.0
Total No. of RCs:	14	32	

The frequency order of the four request types is almost reversed in the case of level I learners and native speakers, and the differences in frequency of repetition/explanation requests (level I – 42.5%: native speakers – 15.4%) and understanding checks (level I – 7.1%: native speakers – 33.3%) are considerable (27.1% and 26.2% respectively). Level I learners depend heavily on bifacial requests (69.0%), which contrasts sharply with the frequency of bifacial requests by native speakers (28.2%). All these figures suggest that level I learners use RCs quite differently from native speakers.

RCs issued by level IV learners are more like those of native speakers than those of level I learners. Most striking is the very similar frequency of understanding checks between level IV learners (37.5%) and native speakers (33.3%). The greatest difference between the two groups is found in the frequency of explanation requests (level IV learners – 6.3%: native speakers – 20.5%), but this 14.2% difference does not approach the large differences mentioned above between level I learners and native speakers. We may conclude that level IV learners have acquired, not only a higher level of grammatical competence, but also the ability to issue requests for clarification in a more natural way. In what follows, we shall examine the request types in some detail.

5.1.1 Understanding checks

Table 5.5			
	FS I	FS IV	NS
Polite copula-type			
Echo	1	1	-
Non-echo	-	4	8
Plain zero-copula-type			
Echo	1	-	2
Non-echo	6	-	2
Incomplete-type			
Non-echo	-	1	1
Total:	8	6	13
Frequency	(7.1%)	(37.5%)	(33.3%)

The listener issues an understanding check when he is not fully certain about his interpretation of the utterance made by the other speaker; that is, he has initially gained a certain degree of understanding, which he needs to have confirmed or corrected. Since lower level learners face problems of total incomprehension more often than advanced learners, it is only natural that the frequency of understanding checks at level I is conspicuously low.

Related to this argument is the fact that the six understanding checks issued by level IV learners are not caused by lexico-grammatical problems: these RCs are directed to latent elements in the preceding utterances of the native speakers (e.g. *Igai tte ano- arubaito desu ka* 'Are you talking about part-time jobs?' in example (13) in Chapter 3). On the other hand, at level I, three of the eight understanding checks are caused by lexical problems and make use of English: *hoseki (is) commercial (desu ka)* in example (12) in Chapter 3 is such an example. Another instance is cited below:

Example 1

1. NS: *a- soo desu kà eijuken ga arimasu kà*
 2. FS: *eiju | ukeñ*
 3. NS: | *eijuken*
 - 4. FS: *permanent resi | dent*
 5. NS: | *soo desù*
- (N3-F103:49)

- 1' NS: I see. So you have permanent residency.
- 2' FS: *Eijuken?*
- 3' NS: *Eijuken.*
- 4' FS: Does that mean 'permanent residency'?
- 5' NS: That's right.

Foreign learners may be tempted to use English to supplement their insufficient competence in Japanese, and, for lower level learners in particular, the use of English is almost inevitable in a context like (1.4). Although (1.4) can be replaced by such expressions as *Zutto irareru to iu koto desu ka* 'Does that mean that one can stay for a long period?', the speaker needs to possess a high command of Japanese to issue such checks. In connection with the use of English in Japanese conversation, however, it should be remembered that an RC in English may cause a further understanding problem for the Japanese interlocutor; and if he is proficient in English, the RC may trigger code switching to English.

With regard to RC forms in understanding checks, it is noticeable that level I learners issue eight understanding checks, of which seven are of the plain zero-copula-type, while at level IV five out of the six are of the polite copula-type. As we have seen, native speakers use zero-copula-type understanding checks relatively frequently in order to create intimacy or to avoid excessive politeness (cf. 4.4.1). However, it is unlikely that level I learners used zero-copula-type understanding checks for this reason; they seem, rather, to have been unable to produce the confirmation pattern of *PQ desu ka*. In this regard, it is noticeable that even an advanced level IV learner failed to formulate a correct zero-copula-type RC:

Example 2

1. NS: *ano- .. atakushi- wa- kochira ni kuru mae ni nihon de nihongo o oshiete mashita kara nê | ... | ano-*
 - 2. FS: | *è.. | gaikokujin ni wá*
 3. NS: *gaikokujin nî nihongo o oshieteta mon desu kara* (omitted)
- (F402-N13:80)

- 1' NS: Well, before I came here, I was teaching Japanese in Japan.
 -2' FS: What about foreigners? Did you teach them too?
 3' NS: Yes, I was teaching foreigners Japanese.

(2.2) is an incomplete RC, literally meaning 'What about foreigners? Did you teach them, too?'. What the learner means to say is 'You mean you taught foreigners?'. The RC should be of the polite copula-type (*Gaikokujin ni desu ka*) or the plain zero-copula-type (*Gaikokujin ni*). The fact that even the level IV learner fails to produce a correct confirmation request suggests that the formula *PQ desu ka* is acquired at a later stage of learning unless learners' attention is specifically directed to this point.

Zero-copula-type RCs, if accompanied by a clear rising intonation, may be taken as being casual. In fact, (2.2) does not sound polite enough for formal interview situations. Four of the seven zero-copula-type understanding checks issued by level I learners are accompanied by a rising intonation. This intonation is probably natural to foreign speakers since an RC is an act of eliciting a response from the listener. However, they should be made aware that a sharp rising intonation accompanying zero-copula-type and incomplete RCs may sound blunt and therefore less polite.

5.1.2 Explanation requests

Table 5.6			
	FS I	FS IV	NS
Verb-type			
Echo	1	-	-
Non-echo	11	-	-
Polite copula-type			
Echo	2	1	3
Non-echo	-	-	3
Incomplete-type			
Echo	4	-	1
Non-echo	-	-	1
Total:	18	1	8
Frequency:	(15.9%)	(6.3%)	(20.5%)

On the basis of the argument put forward in section 4.2 that the explanation request is the most face-threatening type of RC, it may seem puzzling that native speakers issue this type of RC more frequently than foreign speakers. However, if the causes of the comprehension problems are taken into account, a different picture emerges. All the 19 RCs issued by the foreign speakers are almost certainly caused by the lack of lexico-grammatical competence, while only two of the eight RCs issued by native speakers are caused by such problems. Example (3) below illustrates this kind of explanation request:

Example 3

A: a young man from Tokyo; B: a woman in Kyoto

1. A: *tenten to kawaru koto wa ikenai*
2. B: *saraneburi iu no don ne*
3. A: *sara nan desu ka*
4. B: *saraneburi te iu no osaraneburi soo iu kotoba ga aru no dosu ne*
- 5. A: *neburu to iu koto wa doo iu koto desu ka*
6. B: *nameru tchuu koto*

(Gengo Seikatsu, No.275, 1974)

- 1' A: You mean it's not good to change jobs so often?
- 2' B: We call it *saraneburi*.
- 3' A: *Sara* what?
- 4' B: *Saraneburi*. There is a word *osaraneburi*.
- 5' A: What does *neburu* mean?
- 6' B: It means 'to lick'.

Incidentally, the two explanation requests caused by lexical problems occurred in conversations between interlocutors of different dialects. Communication problems will occur more frequently in such situations, and it may be that native speakers feel more free to ask for explanation about lexical meaning in a different dialect.

If we consider only explanation requests caused by gaps in lexico-grammatical competence, we obtain the following table:

Table 5.7			
	FS I	FS IV	NS
Number of RCs	18	1	2
Frequency	15.9%	6.3%	5.1%

Since there is only one case of an explanation request at level IV, no conclusions can be drawn as to the difference between levels I and IV; however, it is not unreasonable to assume that advanced learners, like native speakers, do not depend on this kind of explanation request as frequently as level I learners.

It is also worth noting that, as shown in Table 5.8, lower level learners tend to issue global explanation requests:

Table 5.8			
	FS I	FS IV	NS
Number of global RCs	11	-	1
Number of specific RCs	7	1	7
Total:	18	1	8

We argued in section 4.2 that a global explanation request is more face-threatening than a specific explanation request. However, in the case of level I learners, global explanation requests are used rather readily.

We have so far reported that level I learners use more explanation requests caused by lexicogrammatical problems and more global explanation requests than level IV learners and native speakers. Neither of these facts is surprising since they are closely related to differences in lexicogrammatical competence.

We reported in Chapter 4 that the *Gengo Seikatsu* sample does not contain a single case of a verb-type RC. Level IV learners, like native speakers, do not issue any verb-type RCs. In contrast level I learners issue 12 verb-type RCs as shown below:

Verb-type RCs

- | | | |
|-----|--|----|
| (1) | <i>Wakarimasen</i>
I don't understand | 6 |
| (2) | <i>Yoku wakarimasen</i>
I don't quite understand | 2 |
| (3) | <i>Yoku wakaranai</i> | 1 |
| (4) | <i>Shitsumon ga wakarimasen</i>
I don't understand the question | 1 |
| (5) | <i>NP shiranai</i>
I don't understand NP | 1 |
| (6) | <i>Sumimasen</i>
Sorry, (I don't understand) | 1 |
| | Total: | 12 |

Wakarimasen is a clear statement of total incomprehension; it threatens the face of the listener who has produced the trouble source utterance. The plain forms *wakaranai* and *shiranai* are unacceptable in formal conversation. These RCs may be marked as foreign, or, even worse, as impolite by native interlocutors.

In this regard a polite copula-type RC issued by a level IV learner is worth quoting:

Example 4

1. NS: *yonjuu doru ga ichiman 'en gurai no tsumori de [hai] i itte mireba ii to iu koto de .. sono tsumori de kanojo mo kaimono o shihajimete .. shitara tsukaide ga nai .. wakarimasu ka tsukaide ga nai*
- 2. FS: *tsukaide ga nai chotto wakaranai n desu ga*
3. NS: *tsukaide ga nai u-n tsukaiberi ga shinau u-n* (omitted)
(F404-N14:180)
- 1' NS: I worked on the basis that \$40 was about 10,000 yen. She also used that assumption, and when she started buying things, she found that the money didn't go very far. Do you understand the expression *tsukaide ga nai*?
- 2' FS: No, I don't quite understand that.
- 3' NS: It means the money 'didn't stretch far'.

The NS 'invites' an RC in (4.1). F404 does not say *lie* 'No' or *Wakarimasen* 'I don't understand' alone; he first repeats the trouble spot, then adds *chotto* 'a little' which is often used as a softener in Japanese, and ends the RC with *n desu ga* which indicates hesitation. The FS succeeds in weakening the force of explanation request. This demonstrates his competence in coping with comprehension problems.

Incidentally, the expression *wakarimasu ka* 'Do you understand?' is rarely uttered in formal native-native conversation. The question is considered impolite because it could be a challenge to the listener's competence. The use of this expression by the NS in example (4.1) is an instance of foreigner talk in Japanese. This foreigner talk expression is often introduced at an early stage of teaching as a classroom expression, and learners are often exposed to the exchange: *Wakarimasu ka* 'Do you understand?' – *lie, wakarimasen* 'No, I don't'. However, it seems that students are not made aware that *wakarimasen* is rarely used as an RC in native-native conversation.

Since *sumimasen* expresses the speaker's apology for causing the listener the trouble of explaining what he has just said, it is politer than a blunt *wakarimasen*. Some foreign speakers pronounce the expression with rising intonation just like 'Pardon?' in English. This may be the nearest English translation, but *sumimasen* is not commonly used in this way in native-native conversation, and frequent use of the expression will be marked as foreign.

Two polite copula-type RCs issued by level I learners take the form of *NP wa nan desu ka* 'What's NP?'. This is grammatically correct, but it sounds foreign. *NP tte nan desu ka* or *NP tte nan deshoo ka* are more natural.

- | | | |
|-----|--|------|
| (4) | <i>Motto- yukkuri- ohanashi (shi) te kudasai</i> | ...1 |
| | Would you speak more slowly? | |
| (5) | <i>Sumimasen (ga)</i> | ...5 |
| | Sorry | |

Total: 12

Moo ichido itte kudasai and its variants literally request repetition, but they are classified as repetition/explanation requests in this study because the real intention behind the expressions is not necessarily clear-cut. It is often the case that foreign speakers, particularly lower level learners, issue this kind of RC even when they face an understanding problem, not a hearing problem. In this case the native speaker's repetition of the trouble source utterance does not solve the problem and results in another RC. This point is illustrated in example (5) below:

Example 5

1. NS: *mensetsu- de wa kinchoo suru hoo desu ká*
- 2. FS: *.. u-n motto- yukkuri- ohanashi (shi) te kudasai*
3. NS: *mensetsu .. de wa .. kinchoo suru hoo desu ká kinchoō*
4. FS: *kinchoō-*
5. NS: *shinpai shitē*

(N2-F107:7)

- 1' NS: Do you tend to become nervous at interviews?
- 2' FS: Could you speak more slowly please?
- 3' NS: Do you tend to become nervous at interviews?
- 4' FS: Nervous?
- 5' NS: Do you worry?

The *moo ichido* type RC is absent in the *Gengo Seikatsu* sample. We are not saying that this kind of RC is never used by native speakers, but they are certainly seldom used in face-to-face conversation, and they are likely to be marked as foreign. The plain form of *kikoenai* 'I can't hear you' in (2) and *moo ichido* 'Once again' in (3) may be marked as impolite by some native speakers.

It could be pointed out that *moo ichido itte kudasai*, like *wakarimasen*, is classroom-specific (Mizutani and Mizutani 1979:96). Quite a few Japanese textbooks introduce this expression at a very early stage of presentation (cf. Jorden 1963, Koide (ed.) 1963; Kaigai Gijutsusha Kenshu Kyokai (ed.) 1972; Soga and Matsumoto 1978, to name a few). *Moo ichido* seems to be used by many teachers of Japanese in class. Since learners have been exposed to the expression, it is only natural that some of them use it in communicative situations outside the classroom. They do not realise that the expression is classroom-specific, used by teachers as an instructional tool to elicit repetition or to make them aware that they have made mistakes.

The verb RC *Sumimasen* 'Sorry' is by nature ambiguous: it is a request for either repetition or explanation. Some communication breakdown in contact situations is almost unavoidable, but frequent occurrence of RCs and misunderstandings impose a burden upon native speakers. In these circumstances, the expression of apology by foreign speakers for their lack of competence can be recommended to lower level learners. *Sumimasen*, as already noted, is not commonly used in this way by native speakers, but nevertheless it is a good RC to ask for help.

Formally, the largest group of repetition/explanation requests is of the echo/zero-copula-type. The listener repeats a fragment which he has understood and thereby implicitly asks the speaker of the trouble source utterance to repeat or explain the remainder.

Echoing fulfills several other communicative functions: it may be used as feedback in response to a statement and as a pause-filler following a question as seen in the following constructed examples:

Example 6*

1. A: *kare ashita kuru tte yō* He says he'll come tomorrow
- 2. B: *ashitā* Was that tomorrow?
3. A: *uñ sakki denwa ga attā* Yeah, he phoned earlier

Example 7*

1. A: *kondo no shigoto doō* How is your new work?
- 2. B: *shigotō* Work?
3. A: *uñ* Yeah
4. B: *maamaa da kedo nē* It's okay I guess

Under normal circumstances in native-native conversations, (6.2) and (7.2) are not taken to be RCs. (6.2) may be an expression of surprise, and (7.2) is most likely to be interpreted as a pause-filler.

One-word echoes of this kind are indeed used as repetition/explanation requests in native-native conversation (although there is not a single case in the *Gengo Seikatsu* sample), but they may fail to elicit the desired correction from the listener because of their ambiguous nature. Examples (8) and (9) below illustrate this point:

Example 8

1. NS: *imootosan wá sotsugyoo shitara doo suru no ka nā-*
- 2. FS: *imootō*
3. NS: *uñ yappari mareeshia e kaerimasu ká*
4. FS: *a kotoshí*
5. NS: *uun sotsugyoo shitarā*

(N9-F110: 73)

- 1' NS: What will your younger sister do once she has graduated?
 -2' FS: My younger sister?
 3' NS: Yes, is she likely to return to Malaysia?
 4' FS: Do you mean this year?
 5' NS: No, after she has graduated.

The discourse as a whole shows that the FS in (8.2) understands the word *imooto*, and therefore the trouble spot is not this word but the rest of the question (8.1). However, in (8.3) the NS replies *un* 'Yeah' and then provides one possible answer to her own question. (Native speakers use this strategy to assist foreign speakers' production problems). The NS does not realise that the FS has an understanding problem rather than a production problem. (8.3) does not solve the problem, and the FS is compelled to issue another RC in the next turn (8.4).

Example 9

1. NS: *a-n monashu dé~ [hai] benkyoo ga owattarà .. shigoto wa .. moo kangaemashita kâ*
 -2. FS: *a- .. shigotô*
 3. NS: *un... | ()*
 4. FS: *| a~ .. a-n monashu daigaku dé*
 5. NS: *no ato dè*
 6. FS: *ato dé*
 7. NS: *un*

(N4-F101: 51)

- 1' NS: Have you thought about what sort of job you'd like once you have finished at Monash?
 -2' FS: What sort of job?
 3' NS: Yes.
 4' FS: At Monash?
 5' NS: After you leave Monash.
 6' FS: You mean afterwards?
 7' NS: Yes.

In example (9) the NS is speaking rather slowly. Lengthening coupled with stress on the syllable *de* in *monashu de* in (9.1) is intended to elicit feedback from the FS, who responds to it with *hai*, signalling that she has understood. The two-dot pause is inserted after *owattara* and *shigoto wa* as if she wants to check the FS's understanding. Most probably she has not received any clear sign of a comprehension problem, and believes that the question has been understood. The fact is that the FS has not understood the whole of the initial question, and she simply echoes the word

shigoto which she understands. The NS appears to be waiting for the answer during the longer three-dot pause after *un* in (9.3).

As illustrated in these examples, one-word echo RCs may be misinterpreted as feedback and pause-fillers. The interpretation of a repetition/explanation request depends on the native interlocutor's assessment of the foreign speaker's linguistic competence and of the context in which it is uttered. If the native speaker regards the foreign speaker's ability in Japanese as being higher than it really is, he may not take the RC as such. On the other hand, if he underestimates the competence of the foreign speaker, the corrective response by the native speaker may explain an echoed word which the foreign speaker already knows.

(8.2) and (9.2) are unsuccessful in eliciting the desired responses from the native speakers. From the point of view of clarity, echo/zero-copula-type RCs are not effective. However, this does not mean that echoing is a bad strategy. Not only foreign speakers but also native speakers are in a vulnerable position in contact situations, and they endeavour to facilitate smooth communication. They may, therefore, be discouraged from continuing to talk if they are repeatedly responded to with outright expressions of incomprehension. From this point of view, echo/zero-copula-type RCs are more effective than *Nan desu ka* 'What did you say?; What do you mean?', *Wakarimasen* 'I don't understand' and other similar expressions.

To make their intention clearer, the foreign speakers in examples (8) and (9) could have expanded the echoes into copula-type RCs like:

Imooto ga nan desu ka My sister what?

Shigoto ga nan deshoo ka Job what?

These RCs may be taken to be either repetition requests or explanation requests, but they are most unlikely to be responded to by an affirmative response word *hai* alone.

The three non-echo/zero-copula-type RCs are all issued by a level I learner, F110. (19.2) in Chapter 3 is an example. The other two are issued in the context shown below:

Example 10

1. NS: *omise no hoodo e hatara* | *ita nó*
- 2. FS: | *ima*
3. NS: *uun sono toki omise no hoo de hataraita no sore tomo gaido no hoo de hataraita nó*
(F110-N3: 30)
- 1' NS: Did you work at the shop?
- 2' FS: At the moment?
- 3' NS: No, when you were working – was it at the shop or did you work as a guide?

Example 11

1. NS: *doo iu shigoto ni tsukitai desu ká jaà | shoorai*
- 2. FS: *| imá*
3. NS: *u-n [imá] ima to iu ka shigoto shoorai né*
(F110-N3: 82)

- 1' NS: What kind of work would you like to do? In the future.
- 2' FS: Do you mean now?
- 3' NS: Not exactly now, in the future.

(10.2) and (11.2) at first glance may appear to be confirmation requests. However, we regard them as repetition/explanation requests because the FS issues the RC *ima* three times during the interview and it seems reasonable to assume that she used *ima* as a fixed form for such requests. This is supported by the fact that F110 does not use *wakarimasen*, *sumimasen*, *moo ichido* and other formulas widely used by beginners; she issues a total of 14 RCs and all are one word RCs, except for a single copula-type RC in example (12.2) in Chapter 3.

Native speakers issue five repetition/explanation requests, all of the interjection type (100%). Level IV learners issue two interjective RCs as repetition/explanation requests (2/4: 50%). In contrast, level I learners use interjections relatively infrequently (8/48: 16.7%). Furthermore, five out of the eight interjective RCs are used by F102:

Example 12

1. NS: *ano- .. kaimono ittari suru no wa ano heiki desu shi machi ni mo hitori de ikemasu kedò [āhā-] .. mada komakai ten de wa tabuñ*
- 2. FS: *anoō-*
3. NS: *komakai a- ... soo desu nè .. kantan na koto wa moo jibun hitori de zenbu dekiru yoo ni narimashita shi .. ano maamaa nareta to omoimasu*
(F102-N3: 98)

- 1' NS: Well, shopping and that kind of thing presents no problems. I'm able to go into town by myself. But still there are a few complex things that (I cannot manage).
- 2' FS: Er.....
- 3' NS: Complex things ... like ... I can now cope with all the straightforward things by myself. I think I'm fairly well accustomed to things.

The FS issues *anoo* as in (12.2) five times in the two interviews. He said during the follow-up interview that he used *anoo* in order to avoid explicit RCs such as *wakarimasen*, *moo ichido*, etc. He issued a total of 14 RCs and they were all bifacial requests; he did not use repetition or explanation requests.

This use of *anoo* is comparable to the native speakers' use of interjections. However, there is not a single case in which *anoo* is independently used as an RC in the *Gengo Seikatsu* sample. *Ha* would be an appropriate interjection in (12.2).

Our examination of repetition/explanation requests has revealed that lower level learners not infrequently repeat a word they know and thereby indirectly request repetition or explanation of the trouble source. The same strategy is certainly employed by native speakers. However, the fact that there is not a single case of this RC type in the *Gengo Seikatsu* sample suggests that its frequency is relatively low in native-native conversation. In terms of politeness, one-word echoes of this kind should not be negatively evaluated, but, due to their ambiguous nature, they may fail to elicit the desired response from native listeners.

We have also seen that some of the level I learners use classroom specific verb-type RCs (e.g. *Moo ichido itte kudasai*) which are seldom used by native speakers in face-to-face conversation. However, our data also indicates that some learners appear to employ strategies to avoid these RCs: *ima* in examples (10) and (11) and *anoo* in (12) are examples of such attempts.

5.1.4 HC/explanation requests

Table 5.10			
	FS I	FS IV	NS
Polite copula-type Echo	-	2	-
Plain zero-copula-type Echo	30	1	5
Total: Frequency:	30 (26.5%)	3 (18.8%)	5 (12.8%)

One of the two polite copula-type RCs in the table is presented below:

Example 13

1. NS: *aizuchi wa doo desu ka*
- 2. FS: *etto .. aizuguchi desu ka*
3. NS: *aizuchi to iimasu to aite ga shabetteru no o kiite desu ne [hai] .. 'yes indeed' 'no' 'sure' toka [omitted]*

(N15-F607: 87)

- 1' NS: What do you think about feedback?
 -2' FS: Well, ... *aizuguchi* ?
 3' NS: *Aizuchi* is when you are listening to someone speaking to you and you interject with expressions like 'yes', 'indeed', 'no' and 'sure'.

The larger discourse clearly indicates that the FS does not know the word *aizuchi*. However, we classify (13.2) as a HC/explanation request because it is not certain whether the FS wants to make sure of his hearing or whether he expects the NS to explain the meaning of the word which he has heard as *aizuguchi*.

It is apparent here again that level I learners depend heavily on zero-copula-type echoes. The table supports our contention in 5.1.1 that the RC expression *NP desu ka* is acquired at a fairly late stage of learning.

We have argued in (4.4.1) that native speakers issue zero-copula-type echoes to show politeness as well as intimacy, and that intonation plays an important role in controlling politeness. In this regard, we should note that many of the zero-copula-type echo RCs issued by level I learners succeed in terms of politeness.

Example 14

1. NS: *ano- nihonjin no kankookyaku no tame no tour guide no shi[a-] goto ga atte de sono ..
 kunren de né*
 -2. FS: *kunren*
 3. NS: *uñ training dè*
 4. FS: *a-ñ*

(F103-N4: 50)

- 1' NS: Well, I found work as a tour guide for Japanese tourists, and during the training.
 -2' FS: *Kunren?*
 3' NS: Yeah, during the 'training'.
 4' FS: Oh, I see.

(14.2) sounds appropriate in terms of politeness: its low tone of voice and non-rising intonation may be interpreted as a sign of hesitation.

However, it is highly questionable that F103 in the above excerpt intentionally uses the one word echo *kunren* to control politeness: i.e. as a means of avoiding a more formal expression *kunren desu ka*, whilst at the same time preventing *kunren* becoming too informal by using a hesitant tone. Rather, it is much more plausible to assume that foreign speakers' attitudes toward communication problems in general affects the tone of voice. Judging from the follow-up interviews and my personal observation, lower level learners feel responsible for communication breakdown, and they often hesitate to issue RCs. In addition, although many of them can readily issue a formulaic RC such as *Wakarimasen*, once they pick up an unknown word and attempt to

employ it in an RC, they face difficulties in formulating a correct sentence. Negative evaluation of RCs and a lack of grammatical competence will lead to a hesitant tone. In light of such factors, it is not surprising that many of the zero-copula-type echoes like (14.2) are pronounced with a non-rising intonation in a low voice.

We have so far examined in some detail four types of RCs caused by understanding problems. We shall now turn to the other two types caused by hearing problems.

5.1.5 Repetition requests

Table 5.11			
	FS I	FS IV	NS
Polite copula-type			
Echo	-	1	-
Non-echo	-	-	2
Plain zero-copula-type			
Echo	4	-	-
Interjection	-	1	4
Total:	4	2	6
Frequency:	(3.5%)	(12.5%)	(15.4%)

A repetition request in native-native conversation is very frequently realised by an interjection. This is particularly conspicuous in informal conversations (cf. Table 4.2). In our data, however, most interjections issued by foreign speakers were analysed as repetition/explanation requests.

Level I learners issued four zero-type echo RCs. One has been cited earlier:

Example 15 (= example (8) in Chapter 3)

1. NS: *ano- watashi no sunde (i) ru tokoro wa dandenon roodo ni chikai n desu nê*
- 2. FS: *dandé*
3. NS: *dandenon roodò*
4. FS: *a`*

(F101-N3: 62)

- 1' NS: I live close to Dandenong Road.
 -2' FS: Dande?
 3' NS: Dandenong Road.
 4' FS: Oh.

It is clear from the context that the FS has failed to catch the words *dandenon roodo*, which she certainly knows. A misheard element can be specified by an interrogative word (*nani* 'what', *itsu* 'when', *doko* 'where', *dare* 'who', *doo* 'how, etc.'). The above echo could thus have been replaced by *Doko desu ka* 'Where?'. (16.2) below, issued by a level IV learner, is the only example of this kind in our data:

Example 16

1. NS: *yotsuashi o kirau to iu .. tokoro ga atte* | *buk ()*
 -2. FS: | *naniga kirai* | *desu ká*
 3. NS: | *yotsuashi yotsuashi de*
 aru | *ku doobutsu*
 4. FS: | *a a` hai e` e` e`*

(F404-N14: 40)

- 1' NS: Japanese people (traditionally) dislike the meat of four-legged animals.
 -2' FS: What was it that they don't like?
 3' NS: Four-legged animals.
 4' FS: Oh, yes. That's right.

This fragment demonstrates F404's high competence in Japanese. He reformulates the statement made by the NS in (16.1): the NS uses the verb *kirau* 'hate', but the FS uses a nominal adjective *kirai* 'hateful' and refers to the misheard word by the interrogative *nani* 'what'. A beginner here would issue a zero-type echo RC, such as *yotsu*, or a formulaic verb-type RC.

Incidentally, a specific repetition request like (16.2) may be used as a means of avoiding an explanation request as illustrated in the constructed example below:

Example 17*

1. A: *daigaku no chikaku no furatto ni sunde imasu*
 -2. B: *.. doko ni sunde irasshaimasu ka*
 3. A: *furatto maa nihon no apaato desu*
 1' A: I'm living in a flat close to the Uni.
 -2' B: Where did you say you live?
 3' A: In a flat – like a Japanese apartment.

If B has caught the word *furatto* but does not understand it, (17.2) is a disguised explanation request. Note that in (16.3) the NS in fact explains the word *yotsuashi*, no doubt interpreting the RC in the same way. The FS in example (16), however, said during the follow-up interview that he had heard the word several times before and in (16.2) merely wanted to check on his hearing.

5.1.6 Hearing checks

Table 5.12			
	FS I	FS IV	NS
Verb-type Echo	1	-	-
Polite copula-type Echo	-	-	1
Plain zero-copula-type Echo	4	-	-
Total: Frequency:	5 (4.4%)	-	1 (2.6%)

Since a hearing check is by definition used only when the listener wants to make sure of his hearing of a word or phrase which he thinks he has understood, its frequency is naturally very low even in foreign-native conversations. One example of this type is repeated below:

Example 18 (= example (11) in Chapter 3)

1. NS: *otootosan ima oikutsú*
- 2. FS: .. *otoosañ*
3. NS: *otootosañ*
4. FS: *otootosañ*
5. NS: *uñ*

(N9-F110: 101)

- 1' NS: How old is your younger brother now?
- 2' FS: Father?
- 3' NS: No, your younger brother.
- 4' FS: Younger brother?
- 5' NS: Yeah.

(18.2) could have been replaced by *Otoosan desu ka* or *Chichi desu ka* 'My father?' or turned into a repetition request *Dare desu ka* 'Who?'.

We have examined RCs issued by foreign speakers in terms of inferred intentions. Our data show that level IV learners use RCs in much the same way as native speakers of Japanese, whereas level I learners heavily depend on bifacial RCs, particularly repetition/explanation requests, and use understanding checks much less frequently than the other two groups. These differences are mainly attributable to a lack of grammatical competence at this lower level, but they also seem to be related to some extent to teaching practices in the language classroom.

5.2 RC forms

This section deals with RCs issued by levels I and IV learners and native speakers in terms of RC forms. Table 5.13 below summarises the relative frequency of the nine RC forms.

Table 5.13: Frequency of nine RC forms used by levels I, IV and native speakers			
	FS I	Native Speakers	Difference
Verb-type			
Echo	1.8%	-%	1.8%
Non-echo	20.4	-	20.4
Polite copula-type			
Echo	2.7	12.8	10.1
Non-echo	-	33.3	33.3
Plain zero-copula-type			
Echo	56.6	17.9	38.7
Non-echo	8.0	5.1	2.9
Incomplete-type			
Echo	3.5	2.6	0.9
Non-echo	-	5.1	5.1
Interjection	7.1	23.1	16.0
Total No. of RCs	113	39	

Table 5.13 continued on next page.

	FS IV	Native Speakers	Difference
Verb-type			
Echo	-%	-%	-%
Non-echo	-	-	-
Polite copula-type			
Echo	31.3	12.8	18.5
Non-echo	25.0	33.3	8.3
Plain zero-copula-type			
Echo	18.8	17.9	0.9
Non-echo	-	5.1	5.1
Incomplete-type			
Echo	-	2.6	2.6
Non-echo	6.3	5.1	1.2
Interjection	18.8	23.1	4.3
Total No. of RCs	16	39	

5.2.1 Verb-type RCs

The table above shows that the frequency of verb-type RCs is a strong indicator of learners' proficiency in Japanese. Verb-type expressions such as *Wakarimasen* 'I don't understand', *Moo ichido* 'Say that again, please' and others totally disappear for our data at level IV (as well as at level III).

The 23 non-echo/verb-type RCs are all either explanation requests (e.g. *Wakarimasen* 'I don't understand') or repetition/explanation requests (e.g. *Sumimasen* 'Sorry'), and they are all of the global type. One may argue that lower level learners are forced to issue these RC expressions because they often face problems of total incomprehension. This argument overlooks the fact that beginning learners of Japanese learn these unnatural RC expressions from their teachers and textbooks. Over-exposure to these expressions in the classroom may produce learners who tend to use them even when they are able to issue echo RCs. If they had not known these global RCs, they may well have used interjections (probably transferred from their mother tongue), non-verbal RCs, or perhaps even have tried to echo what they had heard.

5.2.2 Polite copula-type RCs

The polite copula-type RC ending with *desu ka* is the most frequent formal type at level IV and among native speakers, whereas it is the least frequent at level I. The table below compares all four levels and native speakers.

Table 5.14			
Proficiency level	Total no. of RCs	No. of polite copula-type RCs	Frequency
I	113	3	2.7%
II	40	4	10.0
III	14	6	42.9
IV	16	9	56.3
NS	39	18	46.1

A significant frequency gap is observed here again between levels II and III. The frequency of polite copula-type RCs is clearly another indicator of learners' corrective competence.

Levels III and IV learners issue polite copula-type RCs frequently, but there is a difference in their use of this RC form: level III learners mainly use it as an explanation request (i.e. *NP wa nan desu ka* 'What's NP?'), while level IV learners often use *NP desu ka*. Since the number of examples is limited, no clear conclusions can be drawn from our data. However, this difference seems to suggest that level IV learners are aware that explicit explanation requests are not commonly used in formal native-native conversation, while level III learners are not: half of the RCs issued by level III learners are explanation requests.

5.2.3 Plain zero-copula-type RCs

Plain copula-type RCs are either of the *da*-type or zero-type (cf. 3.3.2), but in our data there is not a single case of a *da*-copula-type RC. The most striking fact here is the extremely high frequency of zero-copula-type echo RCs, mostly one-word echoes, at level I (56.6%). The high frequency of one-word echoes at level I is certainly not the result of the strategic use of echo RCs (cf. 4.4.1), but is attributable rather to a lack of lexico-grammatical competence. Furthermore, echoing is probably a universal strategy of asking for help: if one is thrown into a strange speech community, all one can utter in the language is what is picked up from the utterances of the interlocutor. Conversational data of adult-child and native-foreign interaction contain many examples of echoing (cf. Hatch 1978). As a learner learns a language, he can reduce the number of RCs, but until he acquires proper ways of issuing RCs he is likely to depend on echo RCs. Level I learners employ the natural strategy of echoing because they have not acquired formulas for turning one-word echoes into copula-type ones. Beginning learners of Japanese depend on one-word echoes and global verb-type RCs as major strategies for comprehension problems.

As noted in 5.1.3, one-word echoes are ambiguous. In terms of clarity, the one-word echo is inferior to such copula-type RCs as:

- (1) *NP nan desu ka* NP what?
(2) *NP tte nan desu ka* What's NP?

and global RCs such as:

- (3) *Wakarimasen* I don't understand
(4) *Doo iu imi desuka* What do you mean?
(5) *Kikoemasen* I can't hear you

However, cases of misinterpretation were not frequent in our data, as we shall see in the next chapter, and in terms of politeness, the one-word echo may be better than the verb-type RC.

With regard to politeness, it is important to emphasise again that zero-copula-type/echo RCs may be marked as impolite unless accompanied by appropriate paralinguistic and kinesic signals. The native speaker in the following example, for instance, appears to regard the echo RC used by a level IV learner as being inappropriate in this respect.

Example 19

1. NS: *nani ka shinbunkiji ni ni .. shinbunkiji ni kakanakereba ikenai toka nê nani ka shaberanaito () nani ka hitokotô*
- 2. FS: *..shinbunkijî*
3. NS: *shinbun ni kiji o kaku toka sa` [a`] ano terebi de happyoo suru tokà*
(N15-F406: 135)
- 1' NS: Suppose you have to do things like write newspaper articles, or say something. Can you give me some idea?
- 2' FS: Newspaper articles?
- 3' NS: Yeah, you write newspaper articles and appear on television and so forth.

The echo RC (19.2) is pronounced with clear emphasis on the last syllable; it sounds as if the speaker were implying 'What are you talking about?'. In response, the NS uses a masculine sentential particle *sa* (*shinbun ni kiji o kaku toka sa*) which is strongly associated with very informal speech. It seems that the informal echo elicits the informal sentential particle. If the FS had wanted to be polite, she should have issued a weaker RC such as *shinbunkiji...., shinbunkiji to osshaimasu to....*, etc. with hesitant tone. Immediately after the interview, the NS remarked to the author that he had been impressed by the FS's Japanese ability, but he also commented that her facial expression and habit of projecting the lower jaw when asking for clarification had been very awkward and annoying. The fact that even the grammatically competent F406 appears to have produced an inappropriate echo suggests that echoing is not a simple strategy in terms of politeness.

5.2.4 Incomplete-type RCs

The four incomplete-type RCs issued by level I learners are all explanation requests, and have been listed in 5.1.2. Example (2.2) in 5.1.1 is the only case of an incomplete-type RC issued by a level IV learner. We have already noted that the form *NP wa* which is commonly used as an RC is not natural as an explanation request unless it is accompanied by a hesitant tone. However, unlike zero-copula-type echoes which may be responded to with *hai*, *NP wa* elicits explanation, not a simple affirmative response, in this sense it is an effective RC form.

5.2.5 Interjective RCs

Native speakers use interjective RCs relatively frequently: 23.1% in formal and 39.6% in informal situations (cf. Tables 4.1 and 4.2). At level IV the interjective RC is not as frequent (18.8%), and at level I it is the least frequent (7.1%).

Native speakers of Japanese use a wide variety of interjections for various purposes. *Aà*, *uñ*, *eè*, *hai*, *haà*, for instance, are commonly employed as signals of acknowledgement; *haá*, *heé*, *hoó* and *eé* can convey surprise, and so on. Native-native conversation is full of such interjections and other response words used as *aizuchi* or feedback, essentially to signal that the message has been received and understood (Fukushima 1982, LoCastro 1983, Mizutani 1983). The suspension of *aizuchi* is one way to convey a comprehension problem (Mizutani and Mizutani 1979:97).

Some of these interjections, when accompanied by appropriate intonation, may also signal a comprehension problem. Native speakers issue such interjections as *uñ*, *eé*, *há*, *haá*, *hai*, etc. as RCs in order to avoid more conspicuous RC forms. Despite the fact that interjective RCs are essentially ambiguous, native speakers use interjections frequently because they often expect that the listener (i.e. the speaker of the trouble source utterance) can guess where the trouble lies.

The *Gengo Seikatsu* sample contained essentially three types of interjective RCs: *un*, *ee* and *haa*. In formal situations *haa* was used more frequently than *ee*, and *un* was not used at all, while *haa* did not occur in informal situations. In our data there are a total of 15 interjective RCs (cf. Table 5.2), comprising the following:

(1)	<i>eé</i>	6
(2)	<i>anoō</i>	5
(3)	<i>uñ</i>	2
(4)	<i>añ</i>	1
(5)	<i>iiê</i>	1
Total:		15

None of the FSs, even advanced level IV learners, issue the formal *haá* type interjection in the formal interview situations. This indicates that, without specific guidance from teachers, the acquisition of the proper use of interjections requires long years of exposure to different types of natural conversation in Japanese.

With regard to *eé*, English also has a similar-sounding interjective RC. It is not certain whether *eé* used by foreign speakers as an RC in Japanese conversation is transferred from English *ee* or whether it is learned as a new item.

Anoō is solely used by F102 who used it five times in the data. This interjection must have been newly acquired as a Japanese interjection. *Un* and *an* which were used only by lower level learners in our data are probably transferred from English since these informal interjections are not presented as RC forms in ordinary Japanese textbooks for elementary learners.

Un and *an* may be marked as impolite in formal interview situations. *Anoō* is essentially a pause-filler, and it may be misunderstood if it is used as an RC. *Eé* can be used both in formal and informal situations, but it is certainly not very formal.

Example 20

1. NS: *wa waseda no chikaku de kissaten ya nani ya yoku i itta n deshoo nè*
- 2. FS: *é ! (wasedá)*
3. NS: *! waseda daigaku no- sho shozoku deshitara kissaten toka- ! soo iu ()*
4. FS: *! a- anmari anmari suki*
jā nai desu ne

(N15-F406: 49)

- 1' NS: You probably often went to the cafes and shops close to Waseda.
- 2' FS: What?
- 3' NS: You studied at Waseda, so you went to the cafes, and...
- 4' FS: I don't really like (doing that kind of thing).

Here, the interjection *é* with sharp rising intonation sounds very casual. As already reported, *é* together with wide-open eyes and a projected jaw gave a negative impression to the NS. If the FS had used *haá* with slowly rising intonation, the impression would have been more favourable.

Our data show that lower level learners depend heavily on zero-copula/echo type and global verb-type RCs which are seldom used by native speakers, whereas the polite copula-type RC is the major RC form at level IV. The interjective RC may be a natural RC form, but the foreign speakers in our data on the whole make little use of it. This low frequency of interjections is no doubt reflective of grammar-oriented Japanese language teaching which pays little attention to this conversationally important linguistic element.

5.3 Summary

We have now compared RCs issued by levels I and IV learners, in an attempt to answer the two questions posed at the outset of this chapter. (1) Is it the case that RCs used by foreign speakers become more like those of native speakers as their proficiency in Japanese increases?, (2) Are there any RCs used by foreign speakers which appear to be seldom used by native speakers and thus can be regarded as foreign? Here we summarise the major points which have emerged from the discussion.

5.3.1 RCs and proficiency levels

The answer to the first question is:

RCs used by foreign speakers become more like those of native speakers as their proficiency in Japanese increases.

- (1) The understanding check was the major request type at level IV whereas it was the least frequent at level I. This is a reflection of the good command of Japanese at level IV.
- (2) Almost all the explanation requests identified in our data were caused by lexico-grammatical problems and most of them were issued by level I learners. This also indicates the gap between the lexico-grammatical competence of the two groups.
- (3) Level I learners issued bifacial RCs (69%) more frequently than level IV learners (43.8%). This high frequency is due to the frequent use of echo RCs, mostly one-word echoes.
- (4) Both levels I and IV issue echo-type RCs relatively frequently (64.6% (73/113) and 50% (8/16) respectively). However, in the case of level I, only 4.1% of these (3/73) are of the polite copula-type, while at level IV 62.5% (5/8) are polite copula-type RCs. Echoing is a natural strategy, and may be better than blunt global expressions such as *Moo ichido*, *Wakarimasen*, etc. which are not uncommon among beginning learners of Japanese. However, learners should be taught the sentence patterns which enable them to change zero-copula-type echoes into polite copula-type echoes in more formal situations.
- (5) It is striking that 22.2% of the RCs issued by level I learners were of the verb-type, while this RC form was not used at all at level IV. Verb-type RCs (e.g. *Wakarimasen*, etc.) are associated with lower level learners. These RC forms are likely to be marked as foreign.
- (6) Native speakers often use interjective RCs, and level IV learners used this RC form more frequently than level I learners. However, they do not appear to have been able to use interjections properly. Instead, learners at the lowest level seem to have preferred to use one-word echoes and global RCs. If they had known *eé* and *haá*, they could have used interjections much more frequently.
- (7) The level IV learner, F404, demonstrated remarkably high competence in using RCs as exemplified in the following examples:

Igaitte ano- arubaito desu ka (Example (13), in Chapter 3)

Tsukai de ga nai chotto wakaranai n desu ga (Example 4.2)

Nani ga kirai desu ka (Example 16.2)

5.3.2 Inappropriate RCs

The answer to the second question is also affirmative:

Some RCs issued by foreign speakers may be marked as foreign or impolite.

The following RCs used by levels I and II learners were not found in the *Gengo Seikatsu* data; they are likely to be marked as foreign, and the last three may be regarded as impolite by some native speakers.

- (1) *Wakarimasen*
I don't understand
- (2) *Yoku wakarimasen*
I don't quite understand
- (3) *Shitsumon ga wakarimasen*
I don't understand the question
- (4) *Moo ichido itte kudasai*
Would you say that again, please?
- (5) *Motto yukkuri ohanashishite kudasai*
Would you speak more slowly?
- (6) *Sumimasen*
Sorry
- (7) *Gomen nasai*
Sorry
- (8) *Yoku wakaranai*
I don't quite understand
- (9) *NP shiranai*
I don't understand NP
- (10) *Moo ichido*
Once again

Foreign speakers at all levels in our data used echo RCs more frequently than native speakers. Echoing sounds more natural to native speaker listeners than the RCs listed above. Echoing is a natural strategy, as mentioned already, and in general is to be recommended. However, learners should also be taught accompanying sentential formulas, and they should be made aware that one-word echoes with sharp rising intonation may sound abrupt and demanding, so that their repeated use may be marked as foreign or even as impolite.

The interjections *un* and *an* and similar English interjections are inappropriate in formal situations. We reported that *é* in example (20) was most likely to be marked as inappropriate by the native interlocutor. None of the foreign speakers appears to have acquired the proper use of interjections in formal or very formal situations.

We have noted that some RC forms may be marked as foreign or impolite. However, it should also be noted that such RCs are not necessarily always undesirable: they may serve to remind the native speaker of his interlocutor's foreignness, and thus prompt him to adjust his Japanese to the level of his foreign listener. On the other hand, if a foreign speaker wishes to present himself as a competent speaker of Japanese, such RCs should be avoided.

It should be emphasised that RC forms which are likely to be marked as impolite in native-native conversation may not always be marked as such in native-foreign conversation. Follow-up interviews with native speakers strongly suggest that they accept inadequate expressions simply because they are uttered by foreign speakers (although there was also the native speaker who said he had felt insulted a couple of times by the advanced F406). It seems certain that many impolite RCs in our data were simply marked as 'foreign' rather than 'impolite', or were not marked at all. We know very little about the way foreignness features are evaluated by native speakers and how they affect their correction strategies. Empirical research is needed in this area.

Finally, since many of the unnatural RC expressions are seldom used by native speakers, it seems clear that at least some of them must have been learned in formal teaching situations. Many Japanese textbooks for beginners introduce these expressions and teachers use them in class. Model dialogues in textbooks are presented as if comprehension problems do not arise, and teachers themselves tend to use 'teacher talk', a variety of foreigner talk (cf. Henzl 1979). As a result, learners are not given a chance to learn natural RCs.

One may argue against teaching RCs in class on the grounds that RC expressions are in any case automatically mastered as learners learn the target language system, a process which is reflected in our analysis of RCs issued by learners of different levels. However, this does not mean that we should not help them to acquire proper RCs. It takes learners a long time to realise that some RCs presented in textbooks are not in fact used in native-native conversations, and, as we have seen, even advanced learners still have some problems in their use of RCs. It may also be argued that, there being so many other things to teach, the time cannot be afforded to teach RCs. However, it should not take long to make learners aware of the importance of correction strategies and teach them a set of basic RC formulas. Language teachers who wish to help their students to acquire conversational ability should seriously consider developing a syllabus and teaching techniques which will direct students' attention to this important aspect of communicative competence. The pedagogical implications and applications of this study will be further discussed in the concluding chapter.

Chapter 6

RCs AND NATIVE SPEAKER CORRECTION

Since an RC exchange is a collaborative attempt intended to remove an obstacle in communication, both speakers are responsible for the success of their attempt. In order for an RC exchange to succeed the foreign speaker ought to formulate an RC in such a way that his intention is correctly understood by the native speaker, and the native speaker for his part must adjust his own utterance to solve the comprehension problem. An RC exchange may be unsuccessful because the particular form of the RC is misunderstood due to its ambiguity, or because the correction provided by the native speaker is still unintelligible or inaudible to the foreign speaker.

Even amongst Japanese native speakers, failures to elicit a desired correction from the speaker of the trouble-source utterance sometimes occur, as illustrated in the excerpt below:

Example 1

Two men in their fifties are talking in a local train.

1. A: *itsu goro hajiman dai?*
- 2. B: *e?*
- 3. A: *ore mo hanashi ni wa kiita kedo itsu goro hajiman da be?*
4. B: *naanya?*
5. A: *asuko. atagoyama yan no.*

(*Gengo Seikatsu*, No.240, 1971)

- 1' A: When will it begin?
- 2' B: What?
- 3' A: I heard about it, too. I wonder when it will begin.
4. B: What are you talking about?
5. A: There. I mean Atagoyama.

(The meaning is not clear to the author.)

E 'What?' is ambiguous; it may be either a repetition request or an explanation request. Speaker A interprets it as a repetition request and responds accordingly. However, this does not solve the problem, and another RC has to be issued in (1.4). This unsuccessful RC exchange (i.e. (1.2) and (1.3)) is caused by the ambiguous form of the initial RC.

Unsuccessful RCs like (1.2) are likely to occur both in native-native and native-foreign conversation. However, RCs and corrective responses like (2.2) and (2.3) below are much less likely to appear in native-native conversation:

Example 2

1. NS: *hatsuon wa doo desu ka .. hatsuon*
 - 2. FS: *hatsuon*
 - 3. NS: *otō*
 4. FS: *.. u-n hatsuon a- .. shiranai*
- (N2-F107:69)
- 1' NS: How do you cope with pronunciation?
 - 2' FS: *Hatsuon?*
 - 3' NS: Umm the sound.
 - 4' FS: Um, I don't know what you mean by *hatsuon*.

The NS correctly interprets the RC in (2.2) but fails to produce a correction which is understandable to the FS. Clearly, due to gaps in linguistic competence of the kind illustrated in this example, unsuccessful RC exchanges occur in native-foreign conversation more frequently than in native-native conversation. This chapter addresses itself to the following questions:

1. How do native speakers of Japanese respond to RCs issued by foreign speakers?
2. To what extent are the RCs used by our foreign speakers successful?
3. Why are some RC exchanges unsuccessful?

These questions, particularly the first one, are closely associated with foreigner talk (Ferguson 1971). Thus, a brief review of studies in this area is in order before we examine our own data.

6.1 Studies of foreigner talk

Conversation is a joint undertaking by two or more persons to attain their individual goals of interaction, and for this end the participants need to share a common means of communication. If one participant is aware of his interlocutor's lack of communicative ability, he is likely to adjust his language to facilitate communication. Foreigner talk is one such simplified register which 'is used by speakers of a language to outsiders who are felt to have very limited command of the language or no knowledge of it at all.' (Ferguson 1971:143); and it is comparable to baby talk and pidgins in that all are simplified language systems used to facilitate communication.

Since foreigner talk constitutes a possible input for learning, study of this simplified register is of direct concern to foreign language learning and hence to teaching. Various researchers (Hatch, Shapira and Gough 1978; Hatch 1978; Henzl 1979; Arthur et al. 1980; Freed 1981; Clyne 1981; Long 1981, 1983; Skoutarides 1981, 1986) have addressed themselves to questions such as:

1. What is foreigner talk for? Is effective communication its only purpose?
2. What situational factors trigger foreigner talk?
3. To what extent does foreigner talk deviate from normal speech addressed to other native speakers?
4. What are the features of the foreigner talk register?
5. Are the characteristics of foreigner talk similar to those of learner interlanguage?
6. Is there any variation among native speakers in their use of foreigner talk?
7. How do foreign speakers evaluate and react to foreigner talk?
8. How does foreigner talk promote language learning?
9. How is it possible for foreign language learners to control the level of simplification of foreigner talk for better communication and effective language?

Foreigner talk is characterised by lexical simplification (Blum and Levenston 1978), by syntactic peculiarities involving markers (e.g., in English, the copula, negatives, tense-marking), and reduced complexity reflected in such measures as the mean length of utterances, the number of words per sentence and the number of subordinate clauses per sentence. Phonological, prosodic and para-linguistic features such as stress, pause, volume and speech tempo have also been mentioned as foreigner talk characteristics.

Arthur et al. (1980), Freed (1981) and Long (1981) examine the occurrence of some of these foreigner talk features and statistically compare native-native and native-non-native conversations. Snow et al. (1981) analyse spoken data from five Dutch native speakers talking to migrants in government offices, and report the percentage of foreigner talk utterances in their speech. Analysing foreigner talk discourse in terms of these linguistic features is static; it is an analysis of product rather than process. Such an approach alone is not sufficient to capture the interactional aspects of communication. We are more interested in the dynamic aspects of interaction between speakers in contact situations. We wish to discover when and how native speakers use foreigner talk utterances within a single discourse and how both native and non-native speakers interact to succeed in the cooperative venture of conversation.

Freed (1981), who employs both static and dynamic approaches, extracts ten functional categories of foreigner talk utterances. Categories which she terms **language instruction**, **conversational supports** (e.g. 'I know it's hard to speak English') and **correction** (e.g. FS: 'My house is more bigger' NS: 'Your house is bigger') are certainly characteristic of foreigner talk discourse. Hatch, Shapira and Gough (1978), on the basis of discourse analysis of telephone inquiries made by three beginning learners of English to airline companies, restaurants, and typists, report that:

We found that in phone conversations with foreign students, people who have had much less contact with foreigners use a number of discourse strategies: they repeat, they give definitions, slow their speech, stress words which seem important for comprehension, they check for comprehension in a variety of ways, they try to 'fill in' the linguistic gaps of the foreign student's speech by predicting what he meant to say. When none of these devices worked, they either gave up and changed the topic or they admitted they didn't understand in the hope that the student would be able to respond. (1978:57-58).

Many of these discourse strategies were identified in their data when native speakers received RCs from foreign speakers. Discourse examples cited in their paper contain a number of RCs and native speaker corrections.

Long (1983) makes a clear distinction between modified input and modified interaction, and says:

When describing linguistic input, therefore, we are considering only the forms that the learner hears; analysis of interaction means describing the functions of those forms in (conversational) discourse. (1983:127)

and further argues that:

Native speakers appear to modify interaction to two main ends: (1) to avoid conversational trouble, and (2) to repair the discourse when trouble occurs. (1983:127).

He calls devices used for the first purpose 'strategies' and for the second 'tactics' and presents the following table:

Devices used by native speakers to modify the interactional structure of NS-NNS conversation

Strategies (S) (for avoiding trouble)		Tactics (T) (for repairing trouble)	
S1	Relinquish topic-control	T1	Accept unintentional topic-switch
S2	Select salient topics	T2	Request clarification
S3	Treat topics briefly	T3	Confirm own comprehension
S4	Make new topics salient	T4	Tolerate ambiguity
S5	Check NNS's comprehension		
Strategies and Tactics (ST) (for avoiding and repairing trouble)			
ST1	Use slow pace	ST4	Decompose topic-comment constructions
ST2	Stress key words	ST5	Repeat own utterances
ST3	Pause before key words	ST6	Repeat other's utterances

(Long 1983:132)

Long has made a valuable contribution to foreigner talk study by explicitly stating the need to look at discourse from an interactional point of view, paying attention to what we call correction phenomena. It is also worth noting that Long's strategies and tactics are both employed to handle communication breakdown, the only difference being that the former are used before and the latter after the trouble occurs. This corresponds to our distinction between 'pre-correction' and 'post-correction' (cf. Note 5 in Chapter 1).

Despite his contribution, Long's classification of strategies and tactics needs improvement. With regard to S3 (Treat topics briefly), for instance, Long points out that in NN-NNS conversation a large number of topics tend to be treated briefly, rather than a smaller number in more detail (Long 1983:133). This feature of native-foreign conversational discourse is supported by other research and seems to be valid. Native speakers are indeed prepared to employ S3 before a communication problem arises. However, the frequent topic change does not only result from pre-correction. It is quite often the case that native speakers realise after the event that they have failed to select a topic suitable to the foreign interlocutor's competence and are forced to change topics, so that what is needed is to solve a communication breakdown rather than to prevent one. 'Treat topics briefly' can thus be either a strategy or a tactic in Long's sense. Similarly, S5 (Check NNS's comprehension) is often triggered by a covert signal of non-comprehension from the non-native speaker. In such cases the native speaker's comprehension check is aimed at correcting the existing trouble. The strategy/tactic dichotomy is thus not always clear. Long is aware of this point and lists six strategies/tactics (STs). Note, however, that all STs are instructions as to how utterances are produced; they refer to speech manner. Ss and Ts, on the other hand, cover higher level instructions for correction. Thus, S4 (Make new topics salient) is realised by 'slow pace' (ST1), 'stress key words' (ST2), 'pause before key words' (ST3), 'decompose topic-comment constructions' (ST4) and 'repeat own utterances' (ST5).

We have very briefly reviewed the state of foreigner talk study and recognised the importance of a dynamic approach. In this chapter, however, we do not intend to present an alternative to Long's list, but to concentrate on native speakers' post-correction following RCs from foreign speakers.

6.2 Native speaker correction types

Conversational data derived from contact situations contains a large number of native speakers' corrections, but, to my knowledge, no rigorous attempt has been made to identify and analyse various correction strategies. Abunahleh et al. (1981/2) examine native speakers' corrections in response to non-native speakers' repair requests (cf. Schegloff et al. (1977)), or requests for clarification in our terms, in telephone conversations. However, they distinguish only two correction types: repetition with possible reduction (which they assume is caused by hearing problems), and elaboration of the original statement (Abunahleh et al. 1977:117). Varonis and Gass (1985:77) list five types of responses elicited by RCs: repetition, expansion, rephrasing, acknowledgement and reduction. Neither Abunahleh et al. nor Varonis and Gass, however, examine in detail correction types and their relation to RC types. In this section we shall identify

and classify various correction strategies used by native speakers of Japanese in contact conversations.

The native speaker who has received an RC from the foreign interlocutor may try to convey the original message without changing its meaning, or he may choose to reduce the content of the utterance which is the source of the trouble (i.e. the trigger). Native speakers' correction strategies are thus broadly divided into two types: **achievement strategies** are employed to get the original message across, while **reduction strategies** simplify the content of the original message (Faerch and Kasper 1980).

6.2.1 Achievement strategies

We can distinguish three sub-types of achievement strategies: confirmation, repetition and explanation. Confirmation is intended as a positive reply to confirmation requests (i.e. hearing checks and understanding checks). Repetition is an attempt to comply with a repetition request. Explanation covers various clarification techniques including lexical explanation, syntactic modification, and discourse reorganisation.

6.2.1.1 Confirmation

Confirmation requests issued by foreign speakers may elicit an affirmative reply realised by such response words as *ee* 'yes', *hai* 'yes', *un* 'yeah', *soo desu* 'that's right', etc. or a nonverbal gesture of nodding:

Example 3

1. NS: *a-hoka ni wa nihongo no hoka ni wa nani o benkyoo shite imasu ka*
2. FS: *a-n .. a- .. kotoshi*
- 3. NS: *hai*
4. FS: *hai kotoshi a- .. keizaigaku-to () gaku .. a-to*
(N4-F101:37)
- 1' NS: What ... what are you studying besides Japanese?
- 2' FS: Um ... you mean this year?
- 3' NS: Yes.
4. FS: Well, this year (I'm doing) Economics and ...

Confirmation can also be realised by repeating some or all of the other speaker's RC (as opposed to repeating the speaker's previous utterance, i.e. the trigger). (4.3) below is such an example:

Example 4

1. NS: *nihon to oosutoraria to no chigau kankei wa nihonjin no baai (wa) desu ne` kono- u u unazuku tte iu n desu kedomò [hai] kubi o yoku fu-ru* | () |
2. FS: | (cough) | *a soo desu nè*
nihonjin desu kà
- 3. NS: *nihonjin nè*
4. FS: *hai*

(N15-F407:101)

- 1' NS: One of the differences in the relationship between Australia and Japan is that Japanese tend to nod their heads.
- 2' FS: That's true. Do you mean Japanese?
- 3' NS: Yes, Japanese.
- 4' FS: I see.

6.2.1.2 Repetition

Repetition is defined as an act of repeating part or all of what the speaker himself uttered in the trigger. Repetition is used when the speaker believes that the listener has failed to hear the trigger utterance correctly.

Example 5 (= example (8) in Chapter 3)

1. NS: *ano- watashi no sunde(i) ru tokoro wa dandenon roodo ni chikai n desu né*
2. FS: *dandé*
- 3. NS: *dandenon roodò*
4. FS: *a`*

(F101-N3:62)

- 1' NS: I live close to Dandenong Road.
- 2' FS: Dande?
- 3' NS: Dandenong Road.
- 4' FS: Oh.

6.2.1.3 Explanation

Explanation includes attempts to provide explanations of the lexical meaning of a trouble-source word, to modify and expand the trigger, or to reorganise the discourse in order to remove the obstacle in conversation. While these categories are not entirely watertight, they provide a useful broad framework and are illustrated below.

6.2.1.3.1 Lexical explanation

A large number of native speakers' corrections are directed to a particular word in the trigger. Clarification of lexical meaning can be achieved in many ways. Six techniques identified in our data are exemplified below.

(a) *Translation*: The native speakers in our data occasionally gave English equivalents for the words which they believed were the source of understanding problems:

Example 6

1. NS: *ima wa ano- totemo takusan joohoo gā*
2. FS: *joohō*
- 3. NS: *joohoo information ga [hai hai] takusan- ano te ni hairimasu*
(F102-N3:106)

- 1' NS: At the moment, there's lots of information.
- 2' FS: *Joohoo?*
- 3' NS: *Joohoo*. In other words 'information' – there is lots of information.

(b) *Synonymy*: In an attempt to explain word-meanings native speakers may use synonyms or near-synonyms of the trouble-source words:

Example 7 (= example (21) in Chapter 3)

1. NS: *zuibun nihongo ga .. umai desu ne*
2. FS: *a- umai*
- 3. NS: *uñ ojoozu desu ne*
4. FS: *o- mada dame desu*
(N4-F102:9)

- 1' NS: You're really proficient at Japanese.
- 2' FS: Proficient?
- 3' NS: You're really good.
- 4' FS: Oh, no, I'm not.

Example 8

1. NS: *kookoosei ga ne*
2. FS: *hai hai*
3. NS: *gakusei ga [uñ] sensei o ano ijimeru*
4. FS: *ijimeru*

-5. NS: *uñ sensei ni .. sensei o karakattarí*

6. FS: *.. karakattarì*

7. NS: *.. hen na koto o ittarí*

8. FS: *.. hai*

(N4-F102:65)

1' NS: High school students, you know?

2' FS: Uh huh.

3' NS: The students have been bullying their teachers.

4' FS: Bullying?

-5' NS: Um, they have been teasing their teachers.

6' FS: Teasing?

7' NS: Heckling them.

8' FS: Uh huh.

(c) *Antonymy*: Native speakers may make use of opposites in an attempt to clarify word-meaning. Our data contains one such example:

Example 9

1. NS: *josei no hoo ga furi deshoo kà*

2. FS: *furi .. tte | | wakaranai*

-3. NS: | e- | *yuuri tte iu kotoba | gozonji deshoo kà*

4. FS: | *lucky toká*

5. NS: *hai*

(N11-F207:39)

1' NS: Being female is a disadvantage isn't it?

2' FS: I don't know what you mean by *furi*.

-3' NS: Ah ... Do you know the word *yuuri*?

4' FS: Is it something like 'lucky'?

5' NS: That's right.

(d) *Hyponymy*: There is one example in our data where a native speaker provides examples of hyponyms in order to clarify the meaning of a superordinate term (Lyons 1968).

Example 10 (= example (12) in Chapter 3)

1. NS: *ookina hoosekiyasen - .. hooseki*
2. FS: *hooseki (is) commercial (desu ka)*
- 3. NS: *uun hooseki wa ne yubiwa toka ne opaaru toka* ! ()
4. FS: *! o² soo desu kà*
(F110-N3:6)
- 1' NS: A large jewellers shop ... (You know,) jewellery.
- 2' FS: Does *hooseki* mean 'commercial'?
- 3' NS: No, it's rings and opals and things.
- 4' FS: Oh, I see.

Although there is no example in our corpus, the reverse procedure of using superordinate terms to clarify hyponyms is also employed (Blum and Levenston 1978).

(e) Paraphrase :**Example 11**

1. NS: *juke-n .. n nado (de) nayande iru hito imasen deshita*
2. FS: *u-n juken wa nan desu (kà)*
- 3. NS: *e-to- a-no daigaku- ni hairu tame no shiken no* ! (koto ne)
4. FS: *! a- hai*
(N1-F203:81)
- 1' NS: Weren't there any students who were anxious about entrance exams.
- 2' FS: What do you mean by *juken*?
- 3' NS: Examinations that you have to take in order to enter university.
- 4' FS: Oh, I see.

Example 12 (= example (22) in Chapter 3)

1. NS: *sore wa aru teido jikan ga tateba .. kaiketsu suru to omoimasu ka*
2. FS: *kaiketsu- ! tte*
- 3. NS: *! kaiketsu e- ironna a- mondai ga nakunaru to omoimasu ka*
(N11-F304:49)
- 1' NS: Do you think, after a while, that to some extent you'll be able to resolve (the problem)?
- 2' FS: What does *kaiketsu* mean?
- 3' NS: *Kaiketsu* is ... do you think that the various problems will disappear?

(f) *Location*: In our data place names often cause communication breakdown because the foreign listeners do not know where the places are. Native speakers explain by locating these places in relation to well-known places.

Example 13

1. NS: *kinoo wa chotto shujin no tomodachi no - ga meruton ni iru nodē-*
2. FS: *meruton*
- 3. NS: *un meruton te eto- hikoojoo- no- zutto mukoo no hoo desu kedō*
(F11-N1:38)
- 1' NS: Yesterday because a friend of my husband's lives in Melton ...
- 2' FS: Melton?
- 3' NS: Um ... Melton is way over the other side of the airport.

We have listed six techniques for lexical explanation.¹ Some of these techniques can be combined in a single turn as in (14.3) below:

Example 14 (cf. example (13) in Chapter 5)

1. NS: *aizuchi wa doo desu kà*
2. FS: *etto .. aizuguchi desu kâ*
- 3. NS: *aizuchi to iimasu to aite ga shabeteru no o kiite desu nê [hai] .. 'Yes, indeed' 'No' 'Sure' toka [a- soo desu (ka)] .. 'Did you?' toka are desu ne ... aite no [u-n] hanashi-no aida ni (ii tai) kotoba desu*
(N15-F407:87)
- 1' NS: What do you think about feedback?
- 2' FS: *Aizuguchi?*
- 3' NS: *Aizuchi* is when you are listening to someone speaking to you and you interject with expressions like 'yes, indeed', 'no', 'sure', 'did you' and the like. It's a word which you want to say while the other person is speaking.

The NS in this example provides examples of *aizuchi* in English (hyponymy-translation) and adds a loose definition of the word (paraphrase).

6.2.1.3.2 Syntactic modification

Instead of explaining a particular lexical item, native speakers may choose to modify the sentence structure of the trigger by adding and/or deleting words and phrases to assist the foreign speaker to grasp the meaning of the trigger:

Example 15

(Talking about the climate in Singapore)

1. NS: *ano- natsu to fuyu no sa wa- dono kurai arimasu kâ*
2. FS: *sa wa- ; wa*
- 3. NS: *; sa wa ne- natsu to fuyu de dono kurai tenki ga chigaimasu kâ*
(N3-F103:21)

- 1' NS: How severe is the difference between winter and summer?
- 2' FS: What do you mean by *sa wa* ?
- 3' NS: *Sa* means how different the winter and summer weather is.

Rather than attempting to explain the meaning of the word *sa* 'difference' specifically, the NS here reformulates the original question, deleting the trouble source word and adding *tenki* 'weather' and *chigaimasu* 'be different'. The strategy of syntactic modification also includes substitution of the type seen in the following example:

Example 16 (= example (16) in Chapter 3)

1. FS: *do donna kenkyuu- a- shimasu (ka)*
2. NS: *etto ni nichijoo kaiwa nō- nihongo no nichijoo kaiwa no bunseki- desu nê*
3. FS: *ni nihongō- ;*
- 4. NS: *; no- ano- conversation no- kenkyuu desu*
5. FS: *ha-a*
(F104-N7:37)

- 1' FS: What kind of research are you doing?
- 2' NS: I'm looking at everyday conversation – it's an analysis of everyday conversation in Japanese.
- 3' FS: It's Japanese what?
- 4' NS: I'm researching conversation.
- 5' FS: I see.

In this example the NS does not specifically explain the lexical meaning of any word in the trigger. He simply substitutes two words: *nichijoo kaiwa* 'daily conversation' is replaced by *conversation* (translation) and *bunseki* 'analysis' by *kenkyuu* 'study' (synonymy).

Example 17

1. NS: *okaasan mada irassharu*
2. FS: *n- madé*

-3. NS: *uñ mada kochira ni imasu ká*

4. FS: *iê*

(N9-F109:43)

1' NS: Is your mother still here?

2' FS: Um, *made* ?

-3' NS: Yes, is your mother still here?

4' FS: No.

The NS in (17.3) replaces *irassharu* 'to stay' (a plain honorific form) by *imasu* 'to stay' (a polite neutral form). She also adds *kochira ni* 'here' and repeats *mada* 'still'. In the following example modification is much more extensive:

Example 18 (cf. example (18) in Chapter 3)

1. NS: *nihon ni itta toki to nihon ni .. iku- mae no nihon no inshoo to nani ka chigau naa to omou koto arimashitá*

2. FS: *.. e-e (yoku yo) mo moo ichido itte kudasai*

-3. NS: *etto nihon ni iku mae nihon o konna kuni de wa nai ka naa tto omotteta no tō-de- jissai mita .. jibun no me de mita nihon nani ka chigatta koto arimashitá*

(N1-F202:39)

1' NS: When you went to Japan, was there anything that was different to what you expected?

2' FS: Er, could you say that again please?

-3' NS: Was there anything different about what you thought Japan would be like, and Japan as you saw it yourself with your own eyes?

The NS avoids *inshoo* 'impression' and paraphrases it as *konna kuni de wa nai ka naa too omotteta no* 'your idea of what Japan was like', and she adds *jissai jibun no me de mita nihon* 'Japan as you saw it yourself with your own eyes'.

One common feature of the examples of syntactic modification in examples (15) and (18) is that the NSs do not appear to seek to change the original meaning of the triggers.

6.2.1.3.3 Semantic modification

It has been reported that native speakers often change wh questions to yes/no or choice questions in response to RCs issued by foreign interlocutors (Hatch 1978; Hatch, Shapira and Gough 1978). This kind of change necessarily involves syntactic modification, but it also results in 'semantic modification', by which we mean that native speakers change the content of the trigger to make it easier to understand. In example (19) below the NS changes a wh question into a choice question:

Example 19

1. NS: *doo iu tokoro ga .. nihongo no benkyoo .. no naka de muzukashii desu ká*
2. FS: *.. haī a- nihongo wa totemo muzukashiī*
3. NS: *eè [hai] dōko ga muzukashii desu ká*
4. FS: *n doko ga*
- 5. NS: *u-n bunpoo toka kotoba tokà*
6. FS: *uñ kaiwà kaiwà (laugh)*

(N2-F106:35)

- 1' NS: What aspects of Japanese are difficult for you?
- 2' FS: Yes, Japanese is very difficult.
- 3' NS: I see, but what parts in particular are hard?
- 4' FS: What parts?
- 5' NS: Yes, like grammar, or vocabulary.
- 6' FS: Conversation (laugh)

Doo iu tokoro 'what aspects' is obviously difficult for beginning learners to understand. The NS in (19.3) first replaces it by a more basic question word *doko* 'where', which triggers an RC in the following turn, and then supplies some possible answers to her own question in (19.5). She has shifted the open question to the more specific one so that the FS can provide an answer to it.

Example 20

1. NS: *ano- sunda no wa oosutoraria to doitsu to dochira ga nagai desu ká*
2. FS: *.. u-n.... nagai chigai chigái*
- 3. NS: *nagai dochira- no hoo ni nagaku sunde imashita ká .. oosutoraria to doitsu tō*
4. FS: *.... a yoku wakarimaseñ (laugh) suimaseñ*
- 5. NS: *a- jaa ne- oosutoraria ni wa nanneñ .. [a²] sunde imasu ká*
6. FS: *a-m sannen*

(N4-F101:87)

- 1' NS: Have you lived longer in Australia or Germany?
- 2' FS: Um ... longer ... difference?
- 3' NS: Have you spent longer in Australia or Germany?
- 4' FS: I don't understand. Sorry.
- 5' NS: Well, then, how many years have you lived in Australia?
- 6' FS: Um, three years.

In reply to the first RC in (20.2), the NS employs the strategy of syntactic modification: the pseudo-cleft sentence in (20.1) is reformulated more simply. The failure of the correction in (20.3) further prompts the NS to adopt the strategy of semantic modification. In this particular context the answer to the question in (20.5) serves simultaneously as an answer to the question in (20.1). However, it is apparent that the NS in (20.5) has changed the propositional content of the initial question.

Example 21 (= example (2) in this chapter)

1. NS: *hatsuon wadoodesu ká .. hatsuon*
2. FS: *hatsuon*
3. NS: *otō*
4. FS: *.. u-n hatsuon a- .. shiranaì*
- 5. NS: *a- wakarimasen kà hatsuon- to iu no wa un hiragana arimasu né hiragana zenbu iemasu ká*

(N2-F107:69)

- 1' NS: How do you cope with pronunciation?
- 2' FS: *Hatsuon?*
- 3' NS: Yes, the sound.
- 4' FS: Um ... I don't know what you mean by *hatsuon*.
- 5' NS: Oh, you don't know. *Hatsuon* means, er, you know the Japanese syllabary, do you? Are you able to say all of them?

The NS abandons trying to explain the meaning of *hatsuon*. Instead, she changes the open question in (21.1) to a yes/no question in (21.5). Here, the NS makes an even greater change in propositional content, but she has not abandoned her initial attempt to invite the FS's observations on Japanese pronunciation.

6.2.1.3.4 Discourse reorganisation

Native speakers may not correct the trigger immediately after an RC is received. They may instead reiterate a piece of information previously provided by the foreign listener in order to establish a clear topic. Let us examine the next example:

Example 22

1. NS: *ano- suimaseh .. onamae wā-*
2. FS: *su suu desu*
3. NS: *suusañ*
4. FS: *hai hai*

5. NS: *esu yuu ii desu ká*
6. FS: *.. mo ichidó*
- 7. NS: *suù*
8. FS: *suù suu to [è] yonde kudasai*
- 9. NS: *superu wá*
10. FS: *esu yuu ī*
11. NS: *desu nè*

(N2-F106:117)

- 1' NS: Sorry, what was your name?
- 2' FS: Sue.
- 3' NS: Sue?
- 4' FS: Yes, that's right.
- 5' NS: Is that S U E ?
- 6' FS: What was that?
- 7' NS: Sue?
- 8' FS: Sue. Please call me Sue.
- 9' NS: How do you spell that?
- 10' FS: S U E.
- 11' NS: I thought so.

In (22.7) in the above example the NS repeats *suu* in response to the RC in (22.6). This could be simply because she wants to make sure of her name, but it seems more reasonable to assume that this utterance is intended as a preliminary to the next utterance *Superu wa* 'How about the spelling?': i.e. *Suu* in (22.7) is an attempt to establish a conversational topic. What the NS intends to convey in (22.7) and (22.9) seems to be: 'Your name is Sue. Right? This is what I'm talking about. Now, tell me how do you spell it?'.

Example (23) below contains utterances functionally very similar to *Suu* in the previous excerpt:

Example 23

1. NS: *anata no ne- [un] kyoodai wa daigaku wa minna monashú*
2. FS: *.. kyoodai*
- 3. NS: *kyoodai oototosan mo monashu deshó*
4. FS: *uhú*

-5. NS: *kyasarin ima monashu de benkyoo shite[u-n] ru deshó imootosan futari mo monashu deshó*

6. FS: *uhú..| a-*

-7. NS: *| oniisan wá oniisan mo monashu dattá*
(N9-F110:135)

1' NS: Do all your brothers and sisters go to Monash?

2' FS: Brothers and sisters?

-3' NS: Your younger brothers are also at Monash aren't they?

4' FS: Huh?

-5' NS: You are also studying at Monash, aren't you? And your two younger sisters are too, aren't they?

6' FS: Um ...

-7' NS: Were your older brothers at Monash too?

After receiving the RC in (23.2) the NS could have said something like:

un anata no oniisan mo monashu o sotsugyoo shita no
Did your elder brother also graduate from Monash?

However, in (23.3) and (23.5) the NS presents information which has already been supplied by the FS, obviously expecting agreement from her. It seems that the NS issues these two utterances as preliminary steps to the question in (23.7).

We have presented examples of techniques for achievement strategies utilised by the native speakers in our corpus. They are summarised below:

Achievement strategies

1. Confirmation

Realised by affirmative response words or repetition of RCs

2. Repetition

Realised by repetition of the element in the trigger

3. Explanation

1. Lexical explanation

- (a) Translation
- (b) Synonymy
- (c) Antonymy
- (d) Hyponymy
- (e) Paraphrase
- (f) Location

2. Syntactic modification

Realised by addition, deletion and substitution

3. Semantic modification

Realised by change in content

4. Discourse reorganisation

Realised by seeking confirmation of facts known to the listener in order to clarify topic

6.2.2 Reduction strategies

Native speakers may abandon or avoid using achievement strategies in the face of RCs. When they find it difficult to use achievement strategies, they choose to employ reduction strategies, bringing about a reduction of the original message to which an RC is directed. Native speakers may also avoid reduction strategies for fear of causing a further RC, or they may feel that a serious correction attempt is not necessary in the particular context.

Message reduction is a matter of degree. In an extreme case, the speaker may totally abandon efforts at correction, as illustrated in the following constructed example:

1. Husband: Turn on the light.
2. Wife: What?
- 3. Husband: It's alright. I'll do it.

Here the husband does not try to solve his wife's apparent hearing problem. The wife will most probably understand what her husband was saying when she sees him turn on the light. 'It's alright' is a correction avoidance formula. Similar expressions such as 'Nothing', 'Don't worry', and 'Never mind' are meant to revoke trouble-source utterances, and by their use the speaker intends to remove communication breakdown.

However, the distinction between achievement and reduction strategies is not always clear-cut in the analysis of real spoken data. Take example (8) in this chapter, for instance, repeated here for convenience:

Example 8

1. NS: *kookoosei ga nê*
2. FS: *hai hai*
3. NS: *gakusei ga [un] sensei o ano ijimerù*
4. FS: *ijimerù*
- 5. NS: *un sensei ni .. sensei o karakattarí*
6. FS: *.. karakattari*
- 7. NS: *.. hen na koto o ittarí*
8. FS: *.. hai*

(N4-F102:65)

- 1' NS: High school students, you know?
 2' FS: Uh huh.
 3' NS: The students have been bullying their teachers.
 4' FS: Bullying?
 -5' NS: Um, they have been teasing their teachers.
 6' FS: Teasing?
 -7' NS: Heckling them.
 8' FS: Uh huh.

The NS uses the word *ijimeru* 'to bully', and then, in response to the RC directed to this word, she uses *karakau* 'to tease' in (8.5), and further adds *hen na koto o iu* 'to say nasty things' in (8.7). *Ijimeru* and *karakau* share some common semantic features: a person who has the upper hand influences the weaker (although *ijimeru* may imply the use of violence, whereas *karakau* does not). *Hen na koto o iu*, however, is much more general in meaning than the other two. Thus, it may be argued that since *hen na koto o iu* in (8.7) reduces the semantic content expressed in (8.3), its use results from reduction strategies. On this interpretation, a number of achievement strategies which necessarily bring about semantic reduction or change must be seen as instances of reduction strategies.

An alternative interpretation, however, is possible. The NS's general message is that high-school students these days are no longer obedient and are even provocative to their teachers; the NS uses these three expressions to convey this. On this interpretation, we may conclude that the NS does not intend to abandon the original message, and that (8.5) and (8.7) are both used as achievement strategies. In general, this latter interpretation seems intuitively more satisfying, and this is the interpretation we have followed here. In the rest of this section we present clear examples of reduction strategies.

Example 24

1. NS: *a- kikai ga nai desu nê [hai] chansu ga nai n desu nê [hai hai] n- sorede- .. nâretenai n desu nê*
 2. FS: *.. nareté*
 -3. NS: *u-n uñ kikai ga nai uñ onaji koto desu*
 4. FS: (laugh) *hai hai*

(N2-F106:43)

- 1' NS: You haven't had the opportunity ... You haven't had the chance, so you're not accustomed to (conversation).
 2' FS: Accustomed?
 -3' NS: Umm ... it's the same as not having the opportunity.
 4' FS: (laugh) Yes, I see.

The FS simply echoes *narete* 'to get accustomed to' in (24.2). The NS interprets the RC as a specific explanation request and appears to attempt an explanation at the beginning of the turn (24.3). The *un* before *onaji koto desu*, however, indicates that she decides to abandon the lexical explanation and to say that *kikai ga nai* and *nareru* are the same in meaning even though she knows that they are different.

Example 25 (cf. example (12) in Chapter 5)

1. FS: *oosutoraria no seikatsu .. ni- a- narete .. a- i imasu kà*
2. NS: *u-n .. ma-a daibu nareta to omoimasu ano- .. kaimono ni ittari suru no wa ano heiki desu shi machi ni mo hitori de ikemasu kedò [aha-] .. mada- komakai ten dewa tabun*
3. FS: *anō-*
- 4. NS: *komakai a- ... soo desu nè .. kantan na koto wa moo jibun hitori de zembu dekiru yoo ni narimashita shi .. ano maamaa nareta to omoimasu*

(F102-N3:97)

- 1' FS: Are you accustomed to the Australian life style?
- 2' NS: I think I'm fairly well accustomed to it. I have no difficulties in going shopping or going into town by myself. (But), there are still complex things that I (can't) perhaps...
- 3' FS: Um...
- 4' NS: Complex things ... like, well ... I can manage all the straightforward things by myself ... I think I'm reasonably well accustomed.

The NS wants to say that she has more or less got accustomed to Australian life but still has some difficulties in dealing with particular matters. However, in response to the RC in (25.3) she drops the second half of the intended message. At the beginning of (25.4) the NS repeats *komakai* 'detailed, subtle', which suggests that she is aware that it is this word which has caused the FS an understanding problem. The pause filler *a-*, the three-dot pause and the further pause-filler *soo desu ne* which follows the repetition strongly indicate that she is considering achievement strategies. Despite this, (25.4) results in an obvious reduction of the original message.

Example 26 (cf. example (15) in Chapter 3)

1. FS: *monashu to iu daigaku de nihongo ô oshiete kudasa a` suimasen a- oshieru` kudasaimasu ká*
2. NS: *.. a- ie anodaigaku ga atashi o yatotte kuremaseñ*
3. FS: *hai () ([laugh]) wakarimaseñ*
- 4. NS: *wakarimasen kà ano- .. atashi wa monashu de nihongo o oshiete imaseñ*

(F106-N5:29)

- 1' FS: Are you teaching at Monash University at present?
2' NS: Well, no, the university won't employ me.
3' FS: Yes? (laugh) I don't understand.
-4' NS: You don't understand. Um, I'm not teaching Japanese at Monash.

The NS gives an indirect answer to the question by the FS. She said during the follow-up interview that she wanted to say something interesting. This reply, however, confuses the FS, and the NS has to correct her reply by giving a direct answer in (26.4). The essential message (i.e. that she is not teaching at Monash University) is retained, but her initial intention of enlivening the conversation has to be dropped. Incidentally, N5 mentioned in the follow-up interview that her jokes often caused understanding problems to her foreign listener.

Finally, the native speaker in example (27) below abandons correction:

Example 27

1. NS: *demo hooritsu no benkyoo wa nani ga taihen desu ka*
 2. FS: *u-n .. keesisu desu [a-] ... yoku yomimasu*
 3. NS: *.. keesu keesisu to iu to rei desu ne*
 4. FS: *rei*
 - 5. NS: *ano-iguzanpuru deshō | a-iguzanpuru ja nai nē-*
 FS: *| u - - - - - n*
 6. NS: *nani ga ii kashira ironna ano- .. yappari rei to iu*
| kotoba
 7. FS: *| keisatsu no- [un] a-m .. rei desu ([laugh])*
- (N3-F103:79)

- 1' NS: What do you find difficult about studying law?
2' FS: I have to read a lot of cases.
3' NS: When you say *keesisu* you mean *rei* don't you?
4' FS: *Rei?*
-5' NS: Um, it's 'examples', isn't it? Well, it's not really examples, I guess.
FS: Ummm.
6' NS: What's the best way to explain it, I wonder? I suppose it is 'examples'.
7' FS: It means police 'examples'. (laugh)

In (27.3) the NS issues an RC directed to *keesisu* 'legal cases'. In turn the FS in (27.4) issues an RC directed to the word *rei*. The NS uses the English word 'example' as an equivalent for this word. However, the translation does not produce the desired effect, and the NS abandons repairing the communication breakdown. Most probably she has avoided using the word *hanrei*

for 'legal cases', assuming that it would be unintelligible to the FS. Had she been talking to a native speaker or an advanced learner of Japanese, she would have probably issued an RC such as *Keesisu tte saiban no hanrei ne?* ' in (27.3).

Apart from the correction techniques mentioned above, native speakers also adjust their manner of speech. They tend to speak more slowly and clearly and to stress key words more frequently than when talking to other native speakers. They also consciously manipulate pauses to facilitate smoother communication. Long's list of native speakers' strategies and tactics (cf. section 4.1) includes the strategy/tactic (ST3) 'Pause before key words'. Native speakers in our data indeed use pause in order to provide foreign listeners with time to process the input and to prepare themselves for upcoming items which the native speakers regard as crucial for understanding what they are trying to convey. However, native speakers also pause **after** key words: in this case they wish to check their interlocutors' understanding and to invite an RC from them.

In this connection, it should be noted that filled pauses are also conspicuous in native speakers' talk to foreign speakers. A filled pause, unlike an unfilled pause, appears to be used spontaneously or unintentionally when native speakers have difficulty in formulating a corrective utterance. In principle, the speaker claims his turn during a filled pause, whereas he is prepared to relinquish or pass his turn during an unfilled pause. It may be correct to assume therefore that native speakers use filled pauses to solve their production problems, while they manipulate unfilled pauses to assist foreign speakers' comprehension.

In this section we have argued that the native speaker employs either achievement or reduction strategies to repair communication breakdowns caused by the foreign speaker's comprehension problems, and we have presented a list of correction techniques and examples of each type. In the next section we shall examine the question of which RC types elicit which correction types.

6.3 Successful and unsuccessful RC exchanges

We have identified in our data 183 RCs issued by foreign speakers, but 18 of them do not result in RC exchanges. As exemplified in (28) below, five RCs in our data failed to elicit correction from the native speakers:

Example 28

1. NS: *nihon .. nihon wa- soo desu ne .. amerikateki da to omoimasu ká soretomo .. chuugokuteki da to omoimasu ká chuugoku no yoo na kuni .. da to omoimasu ká*
 ; *muzuka* ;
- 2. FS: ; *chuu* ; *hai*
- 3. NS: *u-n u--n nan te ittara ii kana*
- 4. FS: .. *shitsumon ga wakarimaseñ*

(N2-F106:55)

- 1' NS: Do you think that Japan is rather like America or China? Difficult?
 -2' FS: Chi, yes.
 -3' NS: Um ... how should I explain it, I wonder?
 -4' FS: I don't understand your question.

The second RC in (28.4) is issued before the NS formulates correction: (28.2) and (28.3) do not form an RC exchange.

Eleven corrective turns by native speakers began simultaneously with RCs:

Example 29

1. NS: *ima made dono yoo ni nihongo o benkyoo shimashita ka*
 -2. FS: *a- | mo ichido*
 -3. NS: *| gakkoo de tokà .. dōko de benkyoo shimashita ka*
 (N2-F106:26)

- 1' NS: How have you been studying Japanese?
 -2' FS: Pardon?
 -3' NS: At school, for instance. Where did you study?

Here the NS reacts to a nonverbal RC (i.e. the pause and pause-filler) before the verbal RC *Mo ichido* 'Once again' was issued. Therefore, the RC cannot be said to have elicited the native speaker's correction.

Finally, there are two cases in which two RC forms are juxtaposed in a single turn as in example (20.4): *Yoku wakarimasen* 'I don't quite understand' and *Sumimasen* 'Sorry'. These RCs were counted separately as explanation requests, but they belong in a single RC exchange. Thus, the total number of RC exchanges in our data is further reduced by two.

The remaining 165 RC exchanges identified in our data will be analysed in this section. Table 6.1 shows the breakdown of these exchanges in terms of RC intentions and NSs' correction types.

In this study we define an RC exchange which is followed by another exchange as an 'unsuccessful RC exchange'. On this definition 34 of the 165 RC exchanges are unsuccessful. Unsuccessful RC exchanges result from misformulation of RCs by non-native speakers or from misformulation of correction on the part of native speakers. In the following example, the FS appears to be responsible for the failure:

Table 6.1: FSs' RC intentions and NSs' correction types

RC intentions Correction types	Hearing checks	Understanding checks	Repetition requests	Explanation requests	HC/Exp. requests	Rep./Exp. requests	Total
Achievement strategies							
Confirmation	6	13	-	-	2	4	25
Repetition	2	-	7	-	4	25	38
Explanation							
(i) Lexical explanation	-	1	-	16	26	5	48
(ii) Syntactic modification	-	5	1	3	1	19	29
(iii) Semantic modification	-	1	-	7	1	4	13
(iv) Discourse reorganisation	-	1	-	2	1	3	7
Reduction strategies	-	-	-	2	2	1	5
Total	8	21	8	30	37	61	165

Example 30 (= example (5) in Chapter 5)

1. NS: *mensetsu- de wa kinchoo suru hoo desu ka*
- 2. FS: *.. u-n motto- yukkuri- ohanashi (shi) te kudasai*
- 3. NS: *mensetsu .. de wa .. kinchoo suru hoo desu ka kinchoo*
4. FS: *kinchoo-*
5. NS: *shinpai shite*

(N2-F107:7)

- 1' NS: Do you tend to become nervous at interviews?
- 2' FS: Could you speak more slowly please?
- 3' NS: Do you tend to become nervous at interviews?
- 4' FS: Nervous?
- 5' NS: Do you worry?

In the next excerpt the NS fails to clarify her question:

Example 31

(In response to a statement by the FS that she is interested in Japanese history)

1. NS: *ano- dono kurai no rekishi desu kà sugoku furui chuusei tokà .. kodai toka iroiro arimasu kedo dôno kurai furui rekishi desu ká gendai nò .. nanî jidai no desu kâ edo jidai tokà .. | u-n*
- 2. FS: *| wakarimaseñ*
3. NS: *wakarimaseñ ano rekishi desu né*
4. FS: *hai*
5. NS: *hisurotiñ*
6. FS: *hai rekishi | ()*
- 7. NS: *| ano- furusa wa dono kurai furui n desu ká .. u-n nihon de wa ima shoowa jidai tte iu deshò ... a-n wakaranai*
8. FS: *shoowa | juu- |*
9. NS: *| ñ | rekishî*
10. FS: *hai .. nihon no rekishi*
11. NS: *ano- furui .. koro kaná*
12. FS: *hai*
13. NS: *zuu-to furui korò*
14. FS: *hai*
15. NS: *nihonjin ga mada kimono [hai (hai)] kite iru korô samurai no toki*
16. FS: *hai*
17. NS: *a sono kurai nò*
18. FS: *sòd*
19. NS: *(ha) wakarimashità*

(N2-F105:25)

- 1' NS: What sort of history ... Really old? Medieval? Ancient? There are different eras, but ... What period are you interested in? Modern? Edo period?
- 2' FS: I don't understand.
- 3' NS: You don't understand? You are interested in history, right?
- 4' FS: Yes.
- 5' NS: History.
- 6' FS: Yes, history.

- 7' NS: What period are you interested in? At present it is the Showa period in Japan, right.
Er, you don't understand do you?
- 8' FS: Showa period?
- 9' NS: History?
- 10' FS: Yes, Japanese history.
- 11' NS: Are you interested in olden times?
- 12' FS: Yes.
- 13' NS: Ancient times?
- 14' FS: Yes.
- 15' NS: The period when Japanese were wearing kimono ... when there were samurai and so forth.
- 16' FS: Yes.
- 17' NS: It is that period, is it?
- 18' FS: That's right.
- 19' NS: I see.

The NS apparently misjudges the lexico-grammatical competence of the FS, who does not understand the key word *jidai* 'era'. The NS does not succeed in providing intelligible correction in (31.7) despite her repeated attempts to get her question across: the NS asks an open question and then presents a possible answer to the question, but the FS provides minimum response. The NS succeeds in eliciting affirmative replies from the FS, and yet it is not certain whether the FS has understood the initial question correctly.

RC exchanges (30.2) – (30.3) and (31.2) – (31.7) are certainly unsuccessful because they are followed by another RC. It should be noted, however, that the term 'unsuccessful' is defined in relation to discourse development; i.e. it refers to an RC exchange followed by another RC. This definition excludes 'covert' unsuccessful RC exchanges. The RC exchange in the following example is not followed by another RC, but the follow-up interview revealed that the FS did not understand the NS's reply:

Example 32

1. FS: *diguri digrī wa donna daigaku e*
| *arimashita ka* |
2. NS: | *a nihon-* | *ee nihon de e-to .. kyooiku gakushi* | .. *no*
- 3. FS: | *kyooikū-*
- 4. NS: *eè gakui o motte imasù*
5. FS: *gakushī a soo desu ká*

(F206-N1:9)

Table 6.2: Successful and unsuccessful RC exchanges							
RC intentions Successful rate Correction types	Hearing checks	Understanding checks	Repetition requests	Explanation requests	HC/ explanation requests	Repetition/ explanation requests	Total
	S - U	S - U	S - U	S - U	S - U	S - U	S - U
Achievement strategies							
Confirmation	6 - 0 (100.0)	13 - 0 (100.0)	-	-	1 - 1 (50.0)	1 - 3 (25.0)	21 - 4 (84.0)
Repetition	2 - 0 (100.0)	-	6 - 1 (85.7)	-	1 - 3 (25.0)	13 - 12 (52.0)	22 - 16 (57.9)
Explanation							
(i) Lexical explanation	-	1 - 0 (100.0)	-	14 - 2 (87.5)	23 - 3 (88.5)	5 - 0 (100.0)	43 - 5 (89.6)
(ii) Syntactic modification	-	5 - 0 (100.0)	1 - 0 (100.0)	3 - 0 (100.0)	1 - 0 (100.0)	15 - 4 (78.9)	25 - 4 (86.2)
(iii) Semantic	-	1 - 0 (100.0)	-	4 - 3 (57.1)	1 - 0 (100.0)	4 - 0 (100.0)	10 - 3 (76.9)
(iv) Discourse reorganisation	-	1 - 0 (100.0)	-	0 - 2 (0)	1 - 0 (100.0)	3 - 0 (100.0)	5 - 2 (71.4)
Reduction strategies	-	-	-	2 - 0 (100.0)	2 - 0 (100.0)	1 - 0 (100.0)	5 - 0 (100.0)
Total	8 - 0 (100.0)	21 - 0 (100.0)	7 - 1 (87.5)	23 - 7 (76.7)	30 - 7 (81.1)	42 - 19 (68.9)	131 - 34 (79.4)

N.B. Figures in parentheses indicate success rates in percentage.

S: successful

U: unsuccessful

- 1' FS: Where did you do your degree?
 2' NS: In Japan ... I did a Bachelor's degree in Education
 -3' FS: In education ...
 -4' NS: Yes, I have a degree in it.
 5' FS: Bachelor's degree. I see.

The FS said during the follow-up interview that she did not understand *gakushi* 'a Bachelor's degree' and *gakui* 'degree', but clearly stated that (32.5) was not intended to ask for clarification.

Another foreign speaker who often used one-word echo RCs reported during the follow-up interview that he echoed unknown words to check pronunciation so that he could consult a dictionary later. He said that he was prepared to keep the conversation going even if the native speakers did not explain the meaning of the words. Such comments strongly suggest that RC avoidance is not uncommon, and that 'overt' and 'covert' unsuccessful RC exchanges may thus be distinguished. Since covert unsuccessful RCs in our data cannot always be identified with certainty, however, we limit our discussion to overt cases, as indicated.

Table 6.2 (on the previous page) presents the success rate of the 165 RC exchanges. All hearing checks and understanding checks succeeded in eliciting desired responses. Repetition requests are also highly successful. Low success rates are concentrated in the following RC exchange types:

RC intentions		NSs' correction
Explanation requests	<----->	Semantic modification or discourse reorganisation
HC/explanation requests	<----->	Confirmation or repetition
Repetition/explanation requests	<----->	Confirmation or repetition

In the following section we shall examine RC exchanges in more detail, focusing on the unsuccessful RC exchanges in our data.

6.3.1 Hearing checks

Table 6.3		
NS correction types		Success rate (%)
Confirmation	6	100
Repetition	2	100
Total:	8	100

Hearing checks were all successful in eliciting desired responses although two hearing checks were corrected by repetition. One such case is repeated below:

Example 33 (= example (11) in Chapter 3)

1. NS: *otootosan ima oikutsú*

-2. FS: .. *otoosañ*

-3. NS: *otootosañ*

(N9-F110:101)

1' NS: How old is your younger brother?

-2' FS: Father?

-3' NS: Your brother.

6.3.2 Understanding checks

Table 6.4		
NS correction types		Success rate (%)
Confirmation	13	100
Lexical explanation	1	100
Syntactic modification	5	100
Semantic modification	1	100
Discourse reorganisation	1	100
Total:	21	100

Of the 21 understanding checks, eight cases indicated misunderstanding on the part of the foreign speakers. These RCs elicited four different types of corrective utterances. In our data, syntactic modification is the most frequent correction types. (34.3) below is an example of this kind:

Example 34

1. NS: *gakkoo de wa ũna no hanashi desu to gakkoo de wa nihongo wa benkyoo shinakattà .. desu ká*
 - 2. FS: *.. ano ima desu ká*
 - 3. NS: *iya ano- nippon ni iku mae [ee] (no) koko de benkyoo sukoshi shita n desu ká*
 4. FS: *sukoshii jibunde benkyoo shi shimashità hai*
- (N15-F407:35)

- 1' NS: From what you've said ... you didn't study Japanese at school did you?
- 2' FS: Do you mean at the moment?
- 3' NS: No, ... did you do a little bit of Japanese before you went to Japan?
- 4' FS: Yes, I did a bit of study on my own.

There is only one case of lexical explanation. This is due to the fact that only four of the understanding checks were directed to the meaning of words (e.g. *Hooseki is commercial desu ka*: F110-N3:7). A large number of understanding checks were attempts to identify latent sentence topics and time references as in (34.2).

6.3.3 Repetition requests

Table 6.5		
NS correction types		Success rate (%)
Repetition	7/(1)	85.7
Syntactic modification	1	100
Total:	8/(1)	87.5

(Figures in parentheses indicate unsuccessful RCs)

There was only one instance of an unsuccessful RC exchange here, which is presented below:

Example 35

1. FS: *kotoshi a- .. keizaigaku- to () gaku .. a- to keizai n- (no) keizai no rekishi benkyoo shite imasú*
2. NS: *keizai to kei tookeigakú*
- 3. FS: *toí*

- 4. NS: *toō*
- 5. FS: *tooi () statistical*
- 6. NS: *tookeigakū*
- 7. FS: *tookeigakū hai* (laugh)

(N4-F101:40)

- 1' FS: This year ... I'm studying Economics, () tics and Economic History.
- 2' NS: Economic Statistics?
- 3' FS: Static
- 4' NS: Statis
- 5' FS: Staatis ... you mean statistical?
- 6' NS: Yes, Statistics.
- 7' FS: Oh, yes, Statistics. (laugh)

The FS 'knows' the word *tookeigaku* 'statistics' but cannot recall the correct pronunciation. The NS in (35.2) wishes to check her hearing, which in turn causes the FS a hearing problem. *Toi* in (35.3) is an attempt to repeat the word. In response the NS repeats not the whole word but a part of it. This correction fails to solve the FS's hearing problem and results in a complex RC sequence.

The three RC types examined so far are all highly successful in eliciting desired responses. Hearing problems indicated by hearing checks and repetition requests are easy to solve. Similarly, understanding checks based on some degree of understanding of the trigger are also highly successful in eliciting desired responses. The native speakers do not seem to have difficulty in responding to these RC types.

6.3.4 Explanation requests

Explanation requests were all interpreted as such and were mainly responded to by the strategy of explanation. (Two cases were followed by the reduction strategy). However, the success rate for specific explanation requests and global explanation requests differs significantly, as shown in Table 6.6 below:

Table 6.6

NS correction types	Specific explanation requests	Global explanation requests	Total	Success rate (%)
Lexical explanation	15/(2)	1	16/(2)	87.5
Syntactic modification	2	1	3	100
Semantic modification	4/(1)	3/(2)	7/(3)	57.1
Discourse reorganisaton		2/(2)	2/(2)	0
Reduction		2	2	100
Total:	21/(3)	9/(4)	30/(7)	76.7

All 21 specific explanation requests specify a particular element, mostly a word, in the trigger, and 15 of them elicit lexical explanation of various kinds:

- Translation** F303: *joshu wa nan desu ka*
What's *joshu*?
- N1: *a- ashisutanto*
Umm, assistant
- Synonymy** F303: *yarigaiga- wa nan desu ka*
What's *yarigai*?
- N1: *a- e-to- yattete tanoshii desu ne*
Umm, well, it's enjoyable to do it
- Antonymy** cf. example (9.3)
- Paraphrase** cf. example (12.3)
- Location** F103: *eerizu (tte)*
Where is *Eerizu*?
- N4: *nishi no hoo desu ano firippuwan Port Phillip Bay- no nishi no hoo ni (iku to) .. tookii no chikaku ni arimasu*
To the west. You go along Port Phillip Bay to the west. It's near Torquay.

Lexical explanation by the native speakers is largely successful: there are only two cases of unsuccessful correction.

Not all words can readily be explained. In the following example, the NS modifies the syntactic structure of the trigger instead of giving lexical explanation:

Example 36

1. NS: *ano- kyarorain sanga indoneshiago o benkyoo suru yoo ni natta sono kikkake tte iu no wanandeshoè*
 - 2. FS: *.. kikkake tte (nan)*
 - 3. NS: *eè kikkake tte iu no wa ano- .. donna koto kara indoneshiago o benkyoo suru yoo ni natta ka toka dooshite .. indoneshiago o benkyoo suru yoo ni natta kà*
 4. FS: *m- (laugh) tabun a- .. (omitted)*
- (N8-F111:25)
- 1' NS: What gave you the impetus to study Indonesian?
 - 2' FS: What do you mean by impetus?
 - 3' NS: Impetus is ... Why did you begin studying Indonesian?
 - 4' FS: Um... (laugh) perhaps ...

In the following example translation would be the simplest way to solve the problem. The NS, however, avoids using English and adopts the strategy of semantic modification.

Example 37

1. NS: *hatsuon wa doo desu kà ... hatsuoñ*
 - 2. FS: *hatsuon wa nan desu ká*
 - 3. NS: *ano- u-n shaberu u-n nan te iu kashira u-n a i u e o ka ki ku ke ko to iu hiragana yarimashita nè [aa] zenbu iemasu ká*
 4. FS: *a-*
 5. NS: *u-n dore ka .. dekinai oto arimasu ká*
- (N2-F105:121)
- 1' NS: What about pronunciation; is that hard?
 - 2' FS: What do you mean by 'pronunciation'?
 - 3' NS: Well, when you're talking ... How should I explain it? ... You have done all the sounds in the syllabary, a, i, u, e, o, ka, ki, ku, ke, ko, haven't you? Are you able to pronounce all of them?
 4. FS: Ummm.
 5. NS: Is there any sound you can't pronounce?

This exchange is followed by a long sequence of corrective exchanges. *Oto* 'sound' is unknown to the FS, and (37.3) is an unsuccessful correction.

The nine global explanation requests all take the form of *wakarimasen* 'I don't understand' or its variants. Since they do not specify the trouble source, native speakers are required to gauge possible causes of the comprehension problem and launch appropriate correction measures. Because of its vague nature the global explanation request is more prone to lead to wider scale correction such as semantic modification and discourse reorganisation. As seen in Table 6.6, however, these two correction strategies are not very successful mainly because of the foreign speakers' limited lexico-grammatical competence. The next excerpt contains two global explanation requests: the first is responded to by the strategy of discourse reorganisation, and the second by lexical explanation:

Example 38

(The FS says that she lives in a busy district of St. Kilda)

1. NS: *nigiyaka na tokoro [hai hai] desu nê*
 2. FS: *hai totemo nigiyaka na (tokoro desu)*
 3. NS: *ja yoru zuutto nigiyaka desu ka yoru no osoku madè*
 4. FS: ...
 5. NS: *yoru osoku madè omise ga aite imasu ka*
 - 6. FS: .. *wakarimasen*
 - 7. NS: *ano- sentokiruda wa nê [hai] n-kaimono ni benri deshoô*
 8. FS: *hai hai (!)*
 9. NS: *! yoru demo kaimono dekiru deshô .. yorû*
 10. FS: *yoru ... a- yoru yorumonô*
 11. NS: *yoru mô*
 12. FS: *mo*
 13. NS: *kaimono ga dekimasu ka*
 - 14. FS: .. *yoku wakaranai*
 - 15. NS: *yoru wa ja ban wâ ban to iu kotoba o shitte ! imasu ka*
 16. FS: *! â-à .. hai hai ohi sumimaseh*
- (F101-N3:72)

- 1' NS: It is a lively place isn't it?
- 2' FS: Yes, it's really lively.
- 3' NS: So it's really busy till late in the evening?
- 4' FS:

- 5' NS: Are the shops open until late at night?
 -6' FS: I don't understand.
 -7' NS: Um, St. Kilda is really good for shopping isn't it?
 8' FS: Yes, that's right.
 9' NS: You can even shop in the evening, can't you?
 10' FS: Evening ... Evening?
 11' NS: Even in the evening.
 12' FS: Even?
 13' NS: Can you shop?
 -14' FS: I don't really understand.
 -15' NS: Evening ... Night ... do you know the word night?
 16' FS: Um ... Yes, yes, I do. Sorry.

This long series of RC exchanges could have been much shorter if the FS had issued a specific explanation request (e.g. *Yoru wa wakarimasen* 'I don't understand *yoru*') in (38.6). Obviously the NS does not imagine that the simple word *yoru* 'night' could have caused a comprehension problem. The overall success rate of global explanation requests (55.6%) is much lower than that of specific explanation requests (85.7%).

6.3.5 HC/explanation requests

Table 6.7		
NS correction types		Success rate (%)
Confirmation	2/(1)	50.0
Repetition	4/(3)	20.0
Lexical explanation	26/(3)	88.5
Syntactic modification	1	100
Semantic modification	1	100
Discourse reorganisation	1	100
Reduction strategy	2	100
Total:	37/(7)	81.1

Since HC/explanation requests echo a meaningful element in the trigger and can be interpreted as a sign either of hearing problems or of understanding problems, any of the three achievement strategies (i.e. confirmation, repetition and explanation) as well as the reduction strategy will all produce an utterance which is coherent with the RC. In fact, all types of correction strategies were used after this bifacial RC in our data. However, there is a strong tendency for native speakers to interpret this type of RC as a request for explanation rather than a request for confirmation or repetition: 29 of the 37 HC/explanation requests elicited explanation of some kind.

We shall first examine two cases of confirmation; one seemingly successful and the other unsuccessful.

Example 39

(The NS is explaining where *Okayama* is located).

1. NS: *e- tto hiroshima- kiita koto ari | masú*
 2. FS: *| hai*
 3. NS: *oosaka wá*
 - 4. FS: *.. oosaká*
 - 5. NS: *uñ oosaka to hiroshima no mannaka atari desù*
 6. FS: *(ha-a)*
- (F103-N4:30)

- 1' NS: Have you heard of Hiroshima?
- 2' FS: Yes.
- 3' NS: What about Osaka?
- 4' FS: Osaka?
- 5' NS: Yes. (Okayama is) between Osaka and Hiroshima.
- 6' FS: Uh huh.

By definition (39.4) and (39.5) constitute a successful RC exchange: if the FS's intention was to check her hearing, then she must have been satisfied with the confirmation in (39.5). In fact, however, this does not seem to have been the case. Although we do not know her exact intention in (39.4), it is highly probable that she does not in fact know where Osaka is located. This assumption is based on the initial two-dot pause in (39.4) and on the fact that no clear sign of understanding is given in (39.6). If this is the case, this exchange is 'covertly' unsuccessful.

We do not know how the NS interpreted the RC here. However, if she actually interpreted the RC as an explanation request and yet did not go to the trouble of providing a further correction, then it means that the confirmation in (39.5) was used as a means of correction avoidance (i.e. an extreme case of reduction strategy), not as an achievement strategy. In fact it is not uncommon for native speakers simply to confirm or repeat even when they know that the real problem is not one of hearing but of understanding.

Example 40

1. NS: *goryooshin wa nani ka osshaimashitá*
- 2. FS: *goryooshin*
- 3. NS: *goryooshin*
4. FS: *goryooshin*
5. NS: *a- otoosan ya okaasan (wa)*
6. FS: *nannin imasu ká*
7. NS: *ie ano nan ano fureezaa san ga nihon ni ikitai to itta toki ni nan tè-*
8. FS: *hai ano- aa ryooshin wa [un] doozò doozò (laugh) itte kudasai*
(N1-F203:19)

- 1' NS: Did your parents say anything?
- 2' FS: Parents?
- 3' NS: Parents, that's it.
- 4' FS: Parents.
- 5' NS: Yes, your father and mother (and so forth).
- 6' FS: How many people do you mean?
- 7' NS: No, when you mentioned you wanted to go to Japan, what did ...
- 8' FS: Oh, er, they said 'You may go, you may go'. (laugh)

It seems that the FS is unable to recall the meaning of *goryooshin* 'parents'. The NS is either uncertain of the intention of (40.2) or simply misinterprets it: she gives confirmation in (40.3). This confirmation does not solve the problem, and indeed her explanation in (40.5) (i.e. *otoosan ya okaasan* 'your father, mother and others') further confuses the FS. The FS most probably understands the word as 'family'. The correction in (40.7) finally solves the problem. If the FS had issued an explanation request in the first place, the complex RC sequence would not have appeared.

The strategy of repetition is often used to correct mispronunciation. In the next example, the FS fails to echo accurately the word *skii* 'ski', which results in the NS's repetition, an attempt to correct misperception or mispronunciation.

Example 41

1. FS: *meruborun de wa .. donna tokoro- o goranni narimashita ká .. [(laugh)] firippu airandō-*
2. NS: *a- ikimashita yó [laugh] pengin mimashita yó .. e-to kite kara- hantoshi gurai tatta toki ikimashita .. sorekara- .. a- anmari ittemasen nè [u-n] demo- sukii ni ikimashitá*

- 3. FS: .. *sukî*
- 4. NS: *sukîi*
- 5. FS: *a sukî*
- 6. NS: *uñ*

(F103-N4:41)

- 1' FS: What sort of places did you visit in Melbourne? (laugh) For example, Phillip Island?
- 2' NS: Oh, yes, I have been there, (laugh) and I've seen the penguins. Let's see, I went about six months after I arrived Other than that I haven't seen much, but I have been skiing.
- 3' FS: *Suki?*
- 4' NS: Yes, skiing.
- 5' FS: Err, *suki*.
- 6' NS: Yeah.

We cannot determine precisely what sort of correction the FS intends to elicit. However, since *sukîi* 'ski' is certainly known to the FS, one highly probable interpretation of this RC is that the FS has heard *sukîi* as *suki* and guessed that *suki* is a place name. After the NS's correction in (41.4), the FS again wrongly repeats *suki* in a noticeably low voice. This tone of voice gives the impression that she still has an understanding problem. This bifacial RC is thus 'covertly' unsuccessful if the FS intended to ask for explanation. All the other repetitions also followed inaccurate echoes like (41.4), and resulted in a further RC.

It is noticeable that native speakers not infrequently employ the strategy of repetition before giving an explanation, particularly when the RC is incorrectly pronounced. (6.3) in this chapter is such an example. (42.3) below is another:

Example 42 (= example (4) in Chapter 3)

- 1. NS: *ranboona geemu da to omotteta n desu nê*
- 2. FS: .. *ranbô*
- 3. NS: *ranboo rough*
- 4. FS: *a-à*

(F103: N4:62)

- 1' NS: I thought it was a very rough game.
- 2' FS: *Ranbo?*
- 3' NS: I said *Ranboo*. It means 'rough'.
- 4' FS: I see.

The strategy of lexical explanation is significantly more frequent than any other correction strategy in response to HC/explanation requests (e.g. (6.3) and (42.3)), and the success rate appears to be reasonably high (88.5%). On the basis of the figures in Table 6.7, we may conclude that native speakers of Japanese very frequently interpret echo-type RCs as a sign of understanding problems.

It should be clearly noted here that, although we have detected certain tendencies, there is obviously no one-to-one correspondence between RC forms and correction types: native speakers select a correction strategy on the basis of several factors, including RC form, the preceding discourse, and their assessment of the foreign speaker's lexico-grammatical competence. Furthermore, as seen above in example (28), native speakers are not always able to formulate the correction as they wish. In the following excerpt the NS is struggling to give an explanation of the trouble source word:

Example 43

(Talking about Australian football)

1. NS: *de- hakuryoku ga aru shì omoshirokatta (desù)*
- 2. FS: *hakuryoku ! hakuryó !*
- 3. NS: *! un ! hakuryokù*
- 4. FS: *hakuryoku*
- 5. NS: *a-to nan to iu no kashira u--n .. chotto eigo de wakaranai* (laugh)
6. FS: *(hakuryoku)*
7. NS: *sugoi a- semaru kanji nan te iu no overwhelming*
8. FS: *overwhelming*

(F103-N4:66)

- 1' NS: It was very powerful, so it was fun to watch.
- 2' FS: *Hakuryoku?*
- 3' NS: *Hakuryoku.*
- 4' FS: *Hakuryoku?*
- 5' NS: Um ... How should I explain it? I really don't know what it is in English.
- 6' FS: *(Hakuryoku).*
- 7' NS: It means there was a feeling of urgency about it, what shall I say, it was overwhelming.
- 8' FS: Oh, overwhelming.

It is almost certain that the NS in (43.3) realises that *hakuryoku* is unknown to the FS, and yet she is unable to give a prompt explanation of the word. The repetition in (43.3) must have been a result of her inability to solve the FS's understanding problem. In this excerpt the NS makes a strenuous effort to get her message across. However our data also indicates that native speakers of Japanese not infrequently avoid or abandon correction.

6.3.6 Repetition/explanation requests

The repetition/explanation request is the most frequent and least successful RC type in our data. It occurs in two broad formal varieties: echo, and non-echo (e.g. *moo ichido itte kudasai* 'Say that again please', *sumimasen* 'Sorry', *un* 'Uh?', etc.). The following table presents the number of RCs of this type according to their forms:

Table 6.8						
Echo type RCs				Non-echo type RCs		
N S correction types	No. of occurrences	Relative frequency %	Success rate %	No. of occurrences	Relative frequency %	Success rate %
Confirmation	4/(3)	12.5	25.0	-	-	-
Repetition	13/(7)	40.6	46.2	12/(5)	41.4	58.3
Lexical explanation	1	3.1	100.0	4	13.8	100.0
Syntactic modification	10/(3)	31.3	70.0	9/(1)	31.0	88.9
Semantic modification	2	6.3	100.0	2	6.9	100.0
Discourse reorganisation	2	6.3	100.0	1	3.4	100.0
Reduction	-	-	-	1	3.4	100.0
Total:	32/(13)	99.8	59.4	29/(6)	99.9	79.3

Table 6.8 shows that repetition/explanation requests, regardless of form, elicit mainly repetition and syntactic modification. One clear difference between the echo and non-echo type is that the echo type may be interpreted as a confirmation request caused by a hearing problem:

Example 44 (Example (8) in chapter 5)

1. NS: *imootosan wá- sotsugyoo shitara doo suru no ka nā-*
- 2. FS: *imootó*
- 3. NS: *uñ*
yappari mareeshia e kaerimasu ká
4. FS: *a kotoshí*
5. NS: *uun sotsugyoo shitara*

(N9-F110:73)

- 1' NS: What will your younger sister do once she has graduated?
- 2' FS: My younger sister?
- 3' NS: Yes, is she likely to return to Malaysia?
- 4' FS: Do you mean this year?
- 5' NS: No, after she has graduated.

The FS knows the echoed word *imooto* 'younger sister' so that (44.2) is either a request for repetition or explanation of the entire trigger; confirmation by the NS does not solve the problem. There are four cases of confirmation like (44.3), and three of them are followed by another RC. The remaining example (32.4) in this chapter forms a simple RC sequence, but, as reported earlier, the NS's correction fails to solve the comprehension problem.

Another clear difference between the two types is that the echo-type RC is much less likely to elicit lexical explanation: only one of the 32 echo RCs (3.1%) elicited a lexical explanation, as opposed to four of the 29 non-echo RCs (13.8%). Echoing simple and basic words is not an effective strategy if the speaker is seeking explanation.

At this point, let us bring the two echo-type bifacial RCs together. We have seen above (6.3.5) that, in the face of echo-type HC/explanation requests, there is a clear tendency for native speakers to employ the strategies of explanation, particularly lexical explanation. In the case of echo-type repetition/explanation requests, as we have just seen, there is no such tendency; cf. Table 6.9 below.

As shown in the table, two-thirds of bifacial echo RCs elicit some sort of explanation, and the correction strategies are largely successful (86.4%). Thus, echoing is a reasonably effective RC form. This is particularly true when the word echoed is regarded by native speakers as difficult for foreign speakers to understand. However, echoing simple and basic words is more likely to elicit repetition. Inaccurate echoes in particular are often corrected, as in examples (45) and (46) below:

Table 6.9: Bifacial echo-type RCs and NS achievement strategies									
RC intentions Correction types	HC/explanation requests			Rep/explanation requests			Total		
	Total no. of RCs	Relative frequency %	Success rate %	Total no. of RCs	Relative frequency %	Success rate %	Total no. of RCs	Relative frequency %	Success rate %
Confirmation	2/(1)	5.7	50.0	4/(3)	12.5	25.0	6/(4)	9.0	33.3
Repetition	4/(3)	11.4	25.0	13/(7)	40.6	46.2	17/(10)	25.4	41.2
Explanation	29/(3)	82.9	89.7	15/(3)	46.9	80.0	44/(6)	65.7	86.4
Total	35/(7)	100.0	80.0	32/(13)	100.0	59.4	67/(20)	100.0	70.1

N.B. Figures in parentheses indicate the number of unsuccessful RC exchanges.

Example 45 (= example (5) in Chapter 3)

1. NS: *tomodachi wa sugu dekimashita ká*
 - 2. FS: *tomadachi wa sudè*
 - 3. NS: *e sugù | dekimashita ká |*
 4. FS: *| a` | haì dekimashità*
- (N2-F204:31)

- 1' NS: Were you able to make friends easily?
- 2' FS: Was I able to?
- 3' NS: Yes, could you make friends easily?
- 4' FS: Yes, I could.

Example 46

1. NS: *shuu ni ikkai dake oshiete i masú*
 - 2. FS: *shu ní*
 - 3. NS: *shuu nî*
 4. FS: *.. yoku wakarimaseñ*
 5. NS: *u-n to ne-' maishuú ichido dake [a`] oshiete imasù*
- (F101-N3:40)

- 1' NS: I'm only teaching once a week.
- 2' FS: Once a?
- 3' NS: Once a week.
- 4' FS: I don't really understand that.
- 5' NS: Um, each week I'm only teaching once.

Accurate echoing of a simple word may also elicit repetition:

Example 47 (= example (20) in Chapter 3)

1. NS: *karuchaa sentaa- no benkyoo zentai wa- donna inshoo deshita ká*
 - 2. FS: *donná*
 - 3. NS: *donna inshoō*
 4. FS: *inshoō-*
 5. NS: *ano- inshoo wa soo desu ne impression*
 6. FS: *u-n*
- (N8-F207:93)

- 1' NS: What was your overall impression about studying at the Culture Centre?
 -2' FS: What was?
 -3' NS: What was your impression?
 4' FS: *Inshoo*?
 5' NS: *Inshoo* means 'impression'.
 6' FS: Oh, I see.

The low success rate of the echo-type repetition/explanation request is attributable to two factors: native speakers often regard the RC type as being caused by a hearing problem and respond with repetition, while repetition is not usually what the foreign speakers are seeking.

As seen in Table 6.8, non-echo RCs also elicit both repetition and explanation, in roughly equal proportions. Nearly 60 percent of the repetitions are successful:

Example 48

1. NS: *kyoo wa moo jugyoo owarimashitá*
 -2. FS: .. *sumimaseñ*
 -3. NS: *kyoo wa moo jugyoo owarimashitá*
 4. FS: *hà.. (hai)*
- (N4-F101:7)

- 1' NS: Have you finished classes for today?
 -2' FS: Sorry?
 -3' NS: Have you finished classes for today?
 4' FS: Oh... yes.

Example (30.3) on page 117 is an example of an unsuccessful repetition. (49.3) below is another:

Example 49

1. NS: *soo-desu nè .. nihon wa doo iu tokoro da to omoimasu kâ*
 -2. FS: .. *mo ichido itte kuda(sai)*
 -3. NS: *nihon wa dōo iu tokoro da to omoimasu kâ*
 4. FS: *u- ! (tokorō)*
 5. NS: *! u-n .. soo-desu nê* [omitted]
- (N2-F106:47)

- 1' NS: Well, let me see. What do you think Japan is like?
 -2' FS: Could you say that again please?

-3' NS: What do you think Japan is like?

4' FS: (*Tokoro*)

5' NS: Er, what shall I say?

All but one of the explanations appear to solve the comprehension problems. The only unsuccessful case is presented below:

Example 50

1. FS: *oosutoraria ni itsu kimashita ká*
2. NS: *sannen mae desù*
3. FS: *... a dono kurai irasshai masu ká*
4. NS: *e-to- a- kore kara desu ká a- to n yoku wakarimaseñ mada- ato suunen wa iru to omoimasù*
- 5. FS: *moo ichido itte kudasai*
- 6. NS: *ano- sannen mae ni kimashite .. kongo wa ato .. suunen- nannen mo iru to omoimasú*
... e- |
7. FS: *| a nanneñ ... nanneñ*

(F106-N5:9)

- 1' FS: When did you come to Australia?
- 2' NS: Three years ago.
- 3' FS: How long will you stay for?
- 4' NS: Um ... do you mean from now on? I'm not really sure but I think I'll be here for a few years.
- 5' FS: Could you say that again for me please?
- 6' NS: I arrived three years ago and I think I'll stay for several years more.
- 7' FS: ... Er ... how many, how many years?

Finally, how do native speakers in contact situations respond to such verb-type RCs as *Moo ichido* 'Say that again please' and *Sumimasen* 'Sorry', and interjective RCs such as *e?*, *un?* and *ano* 'What??' Table 6.10 summarises these RC types and corresponding native speakers' correction types.

The table indicates that the strategies of repetition and, to a lesser extent, syntactic modification are the most likely correction types after the global verb-type and interjective type RCs. However, larger samples of this type are needed before definite conclusions can be drawn.

Table 6.10: Non-echo repetition/explanation requests and NS correction types				
Correction types	<i>Mocichido</i>	<i>Sumimasen</i>	Interjection	Total
Repetition	2/(2)	4	5/(2)	11/(4)
Lexical explanation	-	1	3	4
Syntactic modification	4/(1)	1	2	7/(1)
Discourse reorganisation	1	-	-	1
Reduction	-	-	1	1
Total:	7/(3)	6	11/(2)	24/(5)

(Figures in parentheses indicate the number of unsuccessful RC exchanges)

6.4 Summary

This chapter has been concerned with native speakers' correction elicited by foreign speakers' RCs. We have presented a typology of correction strategies and analysed 165 RC exchanges on this basis. Although we have not examined correction strategies in native-native conversations, all the strategies identified in our data are indeed used in native situations. However, it seems clear that the relative frequency of these strategies in such situations will be quite different from that in contact situations. The high frequency of lexical explanation observed in our data, for instance, will not be seen in ordinary native-native conversations.

Our data shows that the native speakers of Japanese in most cases correctly interpreted the RC intentions and responded to them accordingly. The four unambiguous types of RC intentions elicited the expected correction types. However, some corrections were still unintelligible to foreign speakers of lower proficiency levels. This was particularly true in the case of global explanation requests (i.e. *wakarimasen* 'I don't understand'). The native speakers were aware of the existence of understanding problems, but were often unable to grasp the real source of the trouble and failed to formulate successful corrections.

Bifacial RCs caused native speakers some difficulty in interpretation, and the strategies of confirmation and repetition very frequently resulted in complex RC sequences. However, there was a tendency for the native speakers to employ the strategy of explanation when they were uncertain of RC intentions. This point is particularly clear in the case of HC/explanation requests which specify a particular element in the trigger as the problem source.

The repetition/explanation request was the least successful type. The native speakers often interpreted this RC type as a request for repetition and seldom employed the strategy of lexical explanation. Thus, echoing simple words as a request for explanation (e.g. *yoru?* 'What does *yoru* mean?') may not be effective. Similarly, verb-type RCs such as *Moo ichido* 'Please say that again' and *Sumimasen* 'Sorry' may also be ineffective as explanation requests because they are often interpreted as requests for repetition.

It is clear from our data that native speakers are very cooperative and understanding towards foreign speakers who face comprehension problems. However, they may occasionally consider a serious correction unnecessary, or they may simply be unable to produce correction which they think is appropriate. In such situations, they may utilise the strategies of confirmation or repetition as correction avoidance, knowing that the real problem is understanding, not hearing.

Successful RC exchanges were defined as those which were not followed by another RC. This is a working definition, and it may be too wide. Based on this definition 34 of the 165 RC exchanges were unsuccessful; however, the number will be higher if we extend the definition to include covert unsuccessful RC exchanges. Although we have not attempted to establish the exact number of covert unsuccessful exchanges, it seems that an unsuccessful correction attempt by the native speaker will trigger the use of RC avoidance strategies. This phenomenon or RC avoidance is the focus of the next chapter.

NOTES

1. Non-verbal gestures may substitute for verbal explanation. Patting one's chest repeatedly while saying *doki doki doki* may be used to explain the word *shinpai suru* 'to worry'.

Chapter 7

RC AVOIDANCE STRATEGIES

In casual everyday conversation, the speaker not infrequently fails to articulate his ideas. But, as we all know, this failure does not always result in an RC from the listener. The listener, for his part, is not always attentive to what is said to him, and he may also be disturbed by physical or psychological noise; yet he does not always resort to an RC to solve his problem. In many native situations, in particular, RCs do not seem to play an important role. Brown and Yule (1983b), based upon their discourse analysis of English conversation, note that:

It is very noticeable that speakers in such 'chat' do not typically challenge each other, do not argue, do not require repetition of something that the other person has said. If a participant in such an interaction does not hear exactly what it was the speaker said, he is quite likely simply to nod and smile. (1983b:12).

How can we account for this low frequency of RCs in native-native conversation? When we feel difficulty in understanding an utterance, we often ignore or guess the trouble spot and attempt to arrive at a reasonable interpretation of it. Comprehension is not an all-or-nothing matter. In fact, difficulty in comprehending an utterance is in many cases not perceived as a real problem detrimental to the flow of conversation, and is simply disregarded. This point is succinctly expressed by Brown and Yule (*ibid.* 59):

In spite of the fact that we are used to achieving only partial success with our own utterances and can only expect a partial understanding of much of the language that is addressed to us, nonetheless we clearly operate with the expectation of a tolerable degree of mutual comprehension, the habit of a tolerable degree of mutual comprehension.

Comprehension problems are indeed noticed, but not always evaluated negatively (Neustupný 1981, 1985; also see Chapter 1). The fact that the listener may be satisfied with a partial understanding of an utterance addressed to him partly accounts for the low frequency of RCs in native-native conversation.

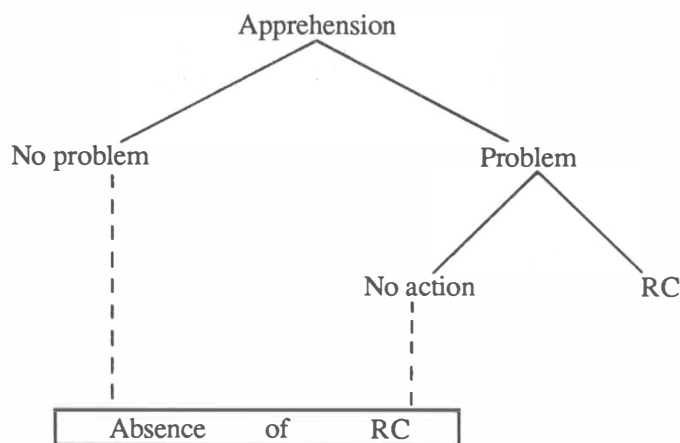
What is a 'tolerable' degree of understanding is of course relative to the situation, particularly to the purposes of the interaction. In this regard the distinction between 'transactional' and 'interactional' conversations is important (Brown and Yule 1983b:11). A large part of everyday conversation is primarily interactional, in the sense that we use language in order to maintain social

ties with the other participants. What counts in such interaction is not what to say, but to say something. RCs are likely to be much less frequent in interactional rather than in transactional conversation, where transmission of information is the primary concern.¹

Whatever the purpose of the interaction, however, there are occasions when the listener realises that he has failed to attain a 'tolerable' degree of understanding for producing a coherent discourse, and evaluates his understanding as 'inadequate'. This negative evaluation may lead to corrective adjustment.

The listener is required to observe both the cooperative principles of conversation (Grice 1975) and the principles of politeness (Brown and Levinson 1978; Holmes 1985). He must weigh the relative importance of these principles when faced with a comprehension problem. He may decide to issue an RC (post-correction), or to prevent an anticipated communication breakdown (pre-correction). On the other hand, he may also choose to avoid issuing an RC because of its face-threatening nature. Considerations of politeness are of course not the only reason for RC avoidance. The listener may be unable to formulate an appropriate RC, or he may fear that an RC will not solve the problem and lead to another comprehension problem.

In short, an absence of RCs can result from factors which, theoretically, might be differentiated in terms of the correction processes presented in Chapter 1. The situation may be summarised in the following diagram:



At a practical level, however, a large part of these correction processes occur in the mind of the listener and do not appear on the surface. This covert nature of correction processes poses severe analytical problems. Let us examine example (1) below:

Example 1 (= example (19) in Chapter 6)

1. NS: *ano- ... doo iu tokoro ga .. nihongo no benkyoo .. no naka de muzukashii desu ka*
- 2. FS: *.. haī a- nihongo wa totemo muzukashii*

3. NS: *eè [hai] dōko ga muzukashii desu ká*
4. FS: *n doko ga*
5. NS: *uun bunnō .. toka kotoba tokà*
6. FS: *uà kaiwà kaiwà (laugh)*

(N2-F106:35)

- 1' NS: What parts of Japanese are difficult for you?
- 2' FS: Yes, Japanese is very difficult.
- 3' NS: I see, but what parts in particular are hard?
- 4' FS: What parts?
- 5' NS: Yes, like grammar, or vocabulary.
- 6' FS: Conversation! (laugh)

The FS fails to issue an appropriate answer to the initial question. She begins her answer (1.2) with a longer transitional pause followed by *hai* with level intonation and ends with a dangling tone. All these features seem to indicate that she has a problem in understanding the question. In (1.3), the NS repeats the question, placing prominence over the key word *doko*, concerning which the FS issues an RC in low voice in (1.4).

The hesitation markers in (1.2) strongly suggest that the FS is aware of her incomplete understanding. However, it is not clear whether she simply disregards her lack of understanding, as 'tolerable', or whether she regards it as a problem and wishes to issue an RC, but abandons it. Furthermore, all these arguments and inferences are irrelevant if she has simply misunderstood the question.

We are interested in how foreign speakers of Japanese cope with comprehension problems without using RCs. As example (1) suggests, this question cannot be properly dealt with unless we obtain the subject's comments on the utterance in question. In this regard, follow-up interviews are indispensable. A number of foreign speakers in our data were indeed able to report which utterances caused comprehension problems during the interviews. However, they were rarely sure whether they intentionally avoided RCs or simply ignored the comprehension problems. As stated earlier, the different reasons for the absence of RCs seem theoretically valid, but they are difficult to maintain in the analysis of real data until we develop research techniques to differentiate one from the other. For this practical reason, we shall interpret the term 'RC avoidance' broadly to refer to both 'intentional' and 'unintentional' non-use of RCs. However, we must be able to identify utterances which actually caused comprehension problems during the interviews. In other words, we must distinguish between authoritative problems and inferred problems: authoritative problems are confirmed by the speaker during the follow-up interview, whereas inferred problems rest only upon our inspection of the data. Here we shall concentrate on authoritative problems and mention inferred problems only where necessary.

7.1 RC avoidance strategies and the structure of conversation

We have identified seven strategies for RC avoidance:

1. Changing
2. Self-hooking
3. Other-hooking
4. Passing
5. Evasion
6. Holding
7. Waiting

These strategies are classified in terms of the development of conversation. Since the listener can use any kind of utterance or silence to avoid showing a sign of comprehension problems, the formal properties of utterances cannot be meaningful criteria for classifying RC avoidance strategies. In this section we shall define and characterise the seven strategies in relation to the structure of conversational discourse (Eisenstat 1975; Sinclair and Coulthard 1975; Hinds 1976, 1978; Coulthard and Montgomery 1981; Wells et al. 1981; Edmondson 1981; Brown and Yule 1983a).

7.1.1 The strategy of changing and conversational topic

Topic is a central notion in conversational analysis, but it is a very elusive one. A topic change is not always clearly marked in spoken discourse. This is particularly true in the case of interactional conversation where the participants have no clear goal other than to maintain contact. Hinds (1978:84) notes that:

In normal conversation, topics often fade in and out, with certain words or expressions triggering associations or memories which turn the conversatin subtly, but not completely away from the major point.

Similarly, Couthard (1977:77) quotes Sacks and writes:

Sacks (1971) observes that in a conversation which is progressing well talk drifts imperceptibly from one topic to another, and suggests that the relative frequency of marked topic introduction is some measure of the quality of a conversation.

In this regard, the distinction between 'speaking topically' and 'speaking on a topic' made by Brown and Yule (1983a) is of great interest and importance. They explain the terms as follows:

We could say that a discourse participant is 'speaking topically' when he makes his contribution fit closely to the most recent elements incorporated in the topic framework. This is most noticeable in conversations where each participant 'picks up' elements from the contribution of the preceding speaker and incorporates them in his contribution

...

In contrast, there is the type of conversational situation in which the participants are concentrating their talk on one particular entity, individual or issue ... An extreme example of 'speaking on a topic' would be in the debate where one participant ignored the previous speaker's contribution on 'capital punishment', for example, and presented his talk quite independently of any connection with what went before. (1983a:84)

They then proceed to argue that a conversation is a dynamic process where each speaker has his own topic, so that the topic of a conversation is a result of negotiation about what to talk about. They remind the conversational analyst of the fact that 'it is speakers, and not conversation or discourse, that have 'topics'.' (ibid. 94; see also Coulthard 1977:78-79).

Since we are dealing with interview discourse, analytic problems centred around topic change are much less prominent. In interviews, only the interviewer has the right to initiate a topic change: i.e. there is no conflict over the selection of a topic. This general rule is observed in our data; the interviewees, particularly native speaker interviewees, occasionally ask questions of the interviewers, but they never introduce a totally new topic.

As Hinds (1978:83) mentions, in interviews a topic change is relatively clearly marked. In our data a long pause and pause-fillers tend to appear before and after stretches of talk in which one can identify a certain topic such as family, hobbies, food, study, etc. Minami (1972) proposes to use pause and pause-fillers as one criterion to extract conversational units. Let us examine the following fragment:

Example 2

(After talking about sport)

1. FS: (a long pause) *am- a- kuruma ga arimasu ká*
 .. | *kuruma*
2. NS: | *kuruma- hai shujin- no kuruma ga | arimasu*
3. FS: | *shujin*
4. NS: *eè .. | atashi wa ano- menkyo o mottemaseh*
5. FS: | *(hai)*
 *itsu nihon ni kaeru tsumori desu ká*

(F105-N5:53)

- 1' FS: Um ... do you have a car?
- 2' NS: A car? Yes, my husband has one.
- 3' FS: Husband?
- 4' NS: Yes, I don't have my licence.
- 5' FS: When do you plan to return to Japan?

Pauses and pause-fillers in (2.1) and (2.5) coupled with an examination of the larger context in which this fragment occurs allow us to assume that (2.1) – (2.4) is topically coherent, and is topically different from the preceding and following sections. Following Hinds (1976:13), we shall call this topically coherent unit of discourse a **paragraph**.

Paragraph boundaries are marked not only by paralinguistic cues but also by expressions such as *tokoro de* 'by the way', *tsugi ni* 'next', *daisan ni* 'thirdly', etc. Some examples of boundary marker expressions found in our data are:

1. *soo desu ne chotto kawarimasu keredomo ..*
Well, let me see. To change the topic, ...
2. *ano- tokorode ano- a- gokenkyuu wa*
Well, by the way, how is your research?
3. *.... an tsugi no koto de*
Um, next topic.
4. *ano- ano suzumat tsuzukimashite wa sono-*
Well, next is ...
5. *.... hai e- saigo ni narimasu ga*
Right. This will be the last point.

These verbal and nonverbal boundary markers and considerations of topical consistency help us to segment interview discourse into paragraphs.²

We have discussed the conversational unit of the paragraph, and defined it as a semantically coherent set of utterances which is often separated from other such sets by boundary markers. Topic change is one way of avoiding an RC, and this is referred to here as the strategy of changing.

7.1.2 The strategies of hooking and the development of conversation

Conversationalists take turns to make contributions to the development of a topic in a paragraph. These developing moves are divided into two types: self-hooking and other-hooking moves.

A self-hooking move is a sub-type of developing move which is an attempt to add new propositional content to the topic under discussion. It is made in reference to the speaker's own previous contribution rather than to that made by the other speaker. Good examples of self-hooking moves are found in the following dialogue between two housewives overheard at a bus-stop:

Example 3

1. A: *uchino Yoshiko ga hyakunichizeki ni kakarimashite nee*
2. B: *Takashi mo hyakunichizeki desu yo*

3. A: *soto e deruna to iu noni kikanai mono desu kara nee*
4. B: *ue no hoo wa mina hyakunichizeki o shinai de sunda noni Takashi hitori kakarimashita wa*
5. A: *kinjo ichimen ni hayatte iru mono desu kara ne nantokashite uchi ni okitai to omotta n desu ga itsunomanika asobi ni itte shimau n desu yo*
6. B: *soredemo nee honto ni yoku kiku kusuri ga te ni haitta mono desu kara yooyoo kooshite watashi ga dearuki ga dekiru yoo ni narimashita*
7. A: *sore wa nan to iu kusuri desu ka*

(Nishio 1957:33)

- 1' A: My Yoshiko has come down with the whooping cough.
- 2' B: Takashi has it too.
- 3' A: I tell her not to go outside, but she never listens.
- 4' B: All the older children managed not to catch it, only Takashi got it.
- 5' A: Because it's all around the neighbourhood, I wanted somehow to keep Yoshiko at home, but she slips out to play.
- 6' B: But I got hold of some really effective medicine, so I'm able to get out now.
- 7' A: What's the name of the medicine?

Utterances (3.3) – (3.6) are all self-hooking moves. As Nishio mentions, both speakers are talking about their individual topic; in Brown and Yule's terms, they are 'speaking on a topic' rather than 'speaking topically'.

An other-hooking move is made in relation to the preceding utterance by the other speaker. (3.2) and (3.7) above are uttered as a direct reaction to the immediately preceding utterances (3.1) and (3.6) respectively.

The distinction between self-hooking and other-hooking is of significance in discussing RC avoidance phenomena. If the listener cannot understand an utterance, it is clearly more difficult for him to use other-hooking strategies than self-hooking strategies. A question, for example, can be viewed as an attempt to prompt the listener to make an other-hooking move, and therefore it is more difficult to avoid an RC following it.

7.1.3 The strategy of passing

Not all conversational moves directly contribute to the development of conversation. Some moves do not add any new proposition to the topic nor change it. They signal that the speaker has nothing to say at that moment: it is, so to speak, a brief rest in conversation. This kind of move is here termed a 'passing move' (Schegloff and Sacks 1973; Weiner and Goodenough 1977).

The typical passing move is realised by what are called *aizuchi* in Japanese (see Duncan 1972 and 1974; Coulthard 1977:61-62; Mizutani and Mizutani 1977:14-15; Hata 1982; Lo Castro 1983; Mizutani 1983). The foreign speakers in our data do not use a wide range of *aizuchi* expressions, but there seem to be at least three distinguishable types in Japanese:

- i. A closed set of interjections and response expressions (cf. Chapter 5)
e.g. *aa, haa, hee, hoo, uun, hai, ee un, soo, soo da ne, soo desu yo*, etc.
- ii. Repetition and restatement of part or whole of the utterance to which they are directed. These forms may be followed by *desu ka, desu ne*, and other variants.
- iii. An open set of sentential expressions. Some of these are:
 - (a) *sore wa shirimasen deshita* I didn't know that
hatsumimi desu That's new to me
 - (b) *ossharu toori desu* That's correct
dookan desu I agree
sono toori desu You are right
 - (c) *ii desu ne* That's nice
hidoi desu ne That's terrible
taihen desu ne That's tough
sore wa ikemasen ne That's too bad, etc.

Aizuchi express acknowledgement and agreement. They may also indicate the speaker's evaluative and emotional attitude towards what has been said or towards the person(s) concerned. Their essential function, however, is to indicate that the message has been received, and they are often used by the interviewer as a reaction to what is said by the interviewee. In analysing Japanese interview discourse, Hinds (1978:84) used the term *feedback* for *aizuchi* and argues that 'in interviews, the typical unit of exchange is not simply **question-answer**, but **question-answer-feedback**.'

It is clear from our study that the foreign interviewers in our data used *aizuchi* even when they did not understand what the native speakers had said to them. In more general terms, the passing move is a simple strategy for RC avoidance.

7.1.4 The strategy of evasion

A directive utterance (Searle 1976) puts the listener under an obligation to make a substantial contribution. A question, for instance, requires the listener to answer. As we have seen, the listener may answer a question on the basis of a guess or partial understanding: this is the strategy of other-hooking move. A further strategy of RC avoidance in this situation is to express inability to answer the question because of a lack of information, not because of a comprehension problem: *Saa yoku wakarimasen ne* 'Well, I don't really know', etc. may be uttered for this purpose. This is here called the strategy of **evasion**. Evasion is tied to the preceding question, but it differs

from other-hooking in that it does not develop the topic. Furthermore, evasion is used only after a directive utterance, whereas other-hooking is possible following any type of utterance.

7.1.5 The strategies of waiting and holding

Turn-taking is rule-governed (Sacks et al. 1974), but it takes place as a result of negotiation between the speaker and the listener. The listener can claim his turn to convey a comprehension problem at any moment of speech by the other speaker. Upon receiving the message, the speaker usually suspends his talk and attends to the problem. However, it is often the case that the listener continues to listen to the talk even though he is having difficulty in understanding it. He could issue an RC at any moment, but he tends to 'hold' the RC and wait to see what follows in the hope of gaining clues to the solution. This is the most passive way of avoiding RCs. In such cases he often uses acknowledgement *aizuchi* (or a nod). This kind of *aizuchi* differs from those used as passing moves in that it does not constitute a move. It is better described as a 'prompt' because it is intended to prompt the speaker to continue talking. It is a useful device to hold an RC. We shall refer to this use of *aizuchi* as the strategy of **waiting**.

The listener may employ the strategy of waiting as long as the other speaker is talking. Once the turn is passed, the listener must take action. If he is not obliged to take a turn following an assertive utterance, he may employ the passing strategy to relinquish the speaker turn. If, however, he is obliged to take a turn, he may choose to hold a response, pretending that he is formulating a reply. We call this strategy **holding**. Various kinds of pause-fillers such as *Soo desu nee* 'Well, let me see', *Maa nan te iimasu ka nee* 'Well, what shall I say' are used for this purpose. It should be noted that neither waiting nor holding constitute a conversational move. They are labels attached to RC avoidance strategies.

Based on a brief discussion of topic and the conversational units of paragraph and move, we have distinguished five types of RC avoidance strategies. The listener faced with a comprehension problem may simply acknowledge the receipt of the message (the strategy of passing) or initiate a new topic (the strategy of changing). However, he is not allowed to use these strategies following a question. In that case he may use the strategy of evasion, which may in turn lead to a topic change. The use of the strategies of self-hooking and other-hooking result in topic development. Since a self-hooking move is tied to the utterance made by the speaker himself in the previous turn, it can be used even when the speaker has not understood the previous utterance of his interlocutor. In contrast, an other-hooking move is tied to the utterance in the preceding turn. An other-hooking move can be used as RC avoidance following assertives as well as directives, whereas a self-hooking move cannot be used following a question or other directives simply because directive utterances require the listener to act accordingly. Apart from these five strategies, we have added two other avoidance strategies, waiting and holding, which are utilised when manipulating the turn-taking system. The following table summarises the classification of RC avoidance strategies in relation to trigger types:

RC avoidance strategies		
Types of avoidance strategies	Types of Trigger	
	Assertives	Directives
1. Changing	+	-
2. Self-hooking	+	-
3. Other-hooking	+	+
4. Passing	+	-
5. Evading	-	+
6. Waiting	+	+
7. Holding	-	+

7.2 Avoidance by foreign speakers

This section describes and discusses RC avoidance strategies employed by foreign speakers. When a speaker turn is passed to the listener facing a comprehension problem, he is forced to decide whether he should issue an RC to solve the problem or not. If he decides not to, he is obliged to take appropriate action depending on the type of trigger. Even if the speaker does not understand a statement made by the other speaker, he may be able to say 'I see' or some other feedback expression and implicitly convey that he has nothing to add to what has been said. However, he may find it difficult to relinquish a speaker turn following a question, simply because a question puts the listener under an obligation to make a substantial response to it. It is therefore intuitively correct to assume that the use of avoidance strategies is constrained by the type of trigger, and this motivates us to examine RC avoidance techniques in terms of two broad utterance types: assertives and directives (Searle 1976). An assertive utterance claims that the proposition it presents is true, false, hypothetical, etc. and it does not necessarily invite a substantial contribution from the listener. On the other hand, a directive utterance expects the listener to perform a certain act. A question is the typical directive utterance in our data.

We examine avoidance strategies following an assertive trigger in 7.2.1, and those following a directive trigger in 7.2.2.

7.2.1 RC avoidance following assertives

We have argued in the previous section that there are four types of conversational moves which can be used to conceal a comprehension problem following an assertive utterance. These moves types will be illustrated and discussed in order.

7.2.1.1 The strategy of changing

Changing moves are intended to introduce a new topic which is unrelated, or only remotely related, to the preceding topic. Let us examine the following fragment:

Example 4

1. FS: *jaa kaettara oshigoto n- donna shigoto o shitai desu ká*
2. NS: *yahari- gaikokujin ni nihongo o oshieru shigoto- o shitai [un] desu ga dakedo amari u-soo iu kikai tte nai n ja nai ka na tte omoi (masu ne) [u-n] n dakara ichiban hayai no ga juku no sensei ka na tte [a-] omotte masu kedo né*
- 3. FS: *.. u-n un shitsurei desu ga a-n moo kekkon shimashita deshó*
(F206-N1:45)
- 1' FS: When you return (to Japan) what sort of work are you hoping to do?
- 2' NS: I'd like to teach Japanese to foreigners, but I doubt whether that kind of work would be available. So probably, the easiest way is to find a teaching position at a private supplementary school.
- 3' FS: .. Umm... I hope you don't mind me asking, but, are you married?

The FS said during the follow-up interview that the word *juku* 'private supplementary school' was unknown to her but she did not ask the NS to explain it because she was satisfied with her findings that the NS wanted to work as a teacher. In (4.3) she faces a comprehension problem, but she avoids an RC, and issues acknowledging feedback and then changes the topic.

Naturally, the speaker must have a topic in order to use a changing move as RC avoidance. In the following example the FS facing a comprehension problem has run out of topics:

Example 5

1. NS: *ano- soo desu ne agasa kurisutii wa wariai kantan na node- n- yomimasu ga dakedo anmari suki ja nai n desu né [u-ñ] te iu no wa nan ka itsu demo burujowa no kanji ga shite [laugh] itsu demo hima no hito no monogatari [laugh] no yoo na ki ga shite [u-n] anmari seikatsukan o kanjinai n desu nè toojoo jinbutsu ni*
- 2. FS: *u-n (laugh)*
3. NS: *a sore dake desu ká*
4. FS: *hai | ()*
5. NS: *| hai doomò*
(F111-N1:50)
- 1' NS: Agatha Christie books are relatively simple so I read them, but I don't like them much. The thing is that they always have a bourgeois atmosphere about them – they're stories of people with loads of free time. The characters never seem quite real.

- 2' FS: Oh....(laugh)
 3' NS: Is that all you're going to ask me?
 4' FS: Yes, that's it.
 5' NS: Thank you.

This fragment is derived from the last section of one of the shortest interviews in our data. The NS's *sore dake desu ka* 'Is that all?' in (5.3) clearly indicates that the FS's nonverbal terminating move is sudden and unexpected.

The follow-up interview with the FS confirmed that, while she understood that the NS did not like Agatha Christie very much, she could not understand the rest of the utterance in (5.1). Despite the problem, she did not request clarification nor attempt to introduce a new topic. She might have been able to continue the interview if she had thought of a new topic.

It is important to note that foreign speakers should be encouraged to store topics which they can talk about comfortably (Hatch 1978:434). A reserve of topics contributes not only to reducing the burden of native speakers who are often forced to nominate a new topic to keep conversation going, but also to enabling foreign speakers to avoid RCs. In ordinary conversation, however, frequent use of changing moves as RC avoidance spoils conversation because topic change is normally negotiated by the participants. Thus, an avoidance strategy more to be recommended is the use of developing moves, to which we now turn.

7.2.1.2 The strategy of self-hooking

Self-hooking moves are made in relation to the current topic; they are tied to what the same speaker has said in his last turn rather than to what was said by the other speaker, or they are related to the topic of talk. Brown and Yule (1983a:85) observe that self-hooking moves are frequently used in conversation. They say:

It is quite often the case that a speaker will treat what he was talking about in his last contribution as the most salient element and what the other speaker talked about, though more recent, as less salient.

Example 6

1. FS: *muzukashii desu kâ ano hon o sagasu kotô*
2. NS: *soo desu ne eto- atashi wa hon a zasshi o kaitai toki wa u-n nihon de dairiten mitai na kai ma kaisha ga atte soko ni okutte kudasai tte [e²] okane o ano okuru wake desu de soko kara okutte kimasu [(laugh)]*
- 3. FS: *ano donna hon wa suki desu kâ*

(F303-N1:23)

- 1' FS: Is it difficult to find books to read?
 2' NS: Yes, it is. When I want to buy books, I mean, magazines, I order them through a sort of agency in Japan. I send off the money and they send me the magazines.
 -3' FS: What sort of books do you enjoy?

The follow-up interview with the FS revealed that she had difficulty in understanding the answer. However, in (6.3), she avoids an RC and asks another question about the current topic of 'reading'.

Example 7

1. FS: *anoo- watashi no okaasan .. a- maini n maiasa to maiban .. u-n to- uñ ... nihongo de .. u-n.. praỹ | (ano) nan te iu (no)*
 2. NS: *| a² oinori ò*
 3. FS: *hai () mai mainichi maiasa to maibañ*
 4. NS: *.. ano- hotokesama ni desu kã*
 5. FS: *uñ soo desù [a²] watashi wa bikkurishità*
 6. NS: *ā-ā (laugh) okyoo o ageru n desu nè*
 -7. FS: *un [he-e-] () mashità*
 8. NS: *shinjin**bukai** hito na n deshoo ka nè*
 -9. FS: *u-ñ un watashi no hoosuto no otoosañ [un] .. juunen mae u- nakunarimashità*
 10. NS: *a-à sore de- otoosan no mae dè- oinorishiterū*
 11. FS: *uñ soo desù*

(N1-F201:72)

- 1' FS: My host mother ... every morning and night she ... umm what's 'pray' in Japanese?
 2' NS: To pray is *oinori* .
 3' FS: Yes, she used to do it every morning and every night.
 4' NS: Did she pray to Buddah?
 5' FS: Yes, that's right. It really surprised me.
 6' NS: Oh, did it? (laugh) Did she chant sutras?
 -7' FS: Yes.
 8' NS: She must be really pious.
 -9' FS: Yes, she is. My host father died ten years ago.
 10' NS: Oh, that's the reason then. She's praying before her husband.
 11' FS: Yes, that's it.

The FS said during the follow-up interview that she did not know *okyoo o ageru* 'to chant a Buddhist sutra' and *shinjinbukai* 'pious'. Since the FS is the interviewee, she could have used a passing move in (7.9) and waited for another question or comment from the NS. However, she instead makes a contribution by explaining why her host mother in Japan prayed twice daily. This utterance is not directly linked with the NS's comment in the preceding turn. In (7.9) the FS avoids a request for clarification and uses a self-hooking move as an avoidance technique. Self-hooking moves share a common feature with changing moves: neither of them are tied to the antecedent utterance of the other speaker. However, the distinction is a matter of degree. The following example poses an analytic problem:

Example 8

(The FS asks the NS how her family and friends reacted to her plan of coming to Australia).

1. FS: *ano ... sensei mo ano chotto shinpai shimashita ka*
2. NS: *u-n ... shinpai to iu u-n soo desu ne- .. shitteru hito ga inakatta shi kochira ni .. [a-] a-donna tokoro ka to iu no mo wakaranakatta shi .. kotoba mo- dekinakatta shi [a-soo] soo iu men de wa shinpai desu ke deshita kedo ano akogare t .. te iu yoo na ne .. kanji de shinpai o keshichau yoo na nan nan te iu n deshoo ne .. ii na ii na to iu fuu ni omotte ita kara [un] sono jiten de wa zenzen shinpai .. zenzen to ittara- uso ni narimasu ke(domo) hotondo .. shinpai shite masen deshita [a soo] u-n naru yooni nare to iu*
- 3. FS: *a-a [un] hai wakarimashita osutoreria ni kite kara nihon ni asobi ni kaerimashita ka*
(F202-N2:37)

- 1' FS: Did you worry (about coming to Australia)?
- 2' NS: Well, I didn't know anyone here, I didn't know what sort of place it was and I couldn't speak the language. From that point of view, I guess I worried, but I had a yearning to come which made my fears disappear. I kept thinking it would be great to go and at those moments I wasn't worried at all. Well, actually, to say that wouldn't be true, but I felt that things would take care of themselves.
- 3' FS: I understand. Have you been back to Japan since you came here?

The FS reported how she interpreted this long turn:

The NS did worry a bit as she knew no one and knew nothing about Australia. Her feelings revolved between wanting to go to Australia and wanting to stay in Japan.

Akogare 'yearnings', *sono jiten* 'at the moment' and *naru yoo ni nare* 'let things take care of themselves' were unknown to her. Certainly, she ignored the unintelligible parts and made much use of guesswork. The follow-up interview revealed that the FS associated *naru yoo ni nare* with *nareru* 'to become accustomed to'. In (8.3) she attempted to avoid an RC.

The question we face here is whether (8.3) is a self-hooking move or a changing move. The two speakers have been talking about the NS's coming to Australia and now the FS asks about her going back to Japan. 'Coming' is easily associated with 'going back'; in this sense the FS's

question is related, though not directly, to the previous topic. There is also no clear paragraph boundary marker such as a pause or a pause-filler. On these grounds we regard (8.3) as a self-hooking move, but, as already mentioned, the distinction between the two moves is not always clear-cut.

7.2.1.3 The strategy of other-hooking

An other-hooking move, which attempts to develop topic talk, is closely connected with what is said by the other speaker in the immediately preceding turn. As indicated above (7.1.2), it is necessary to attain a certain degree of understanding of the trigger in order to make this move. Let us first examine the following example:

Example 9

1. FS: *ano- seijigaku wa-doodesuká*
2. NS: *u-n muzukashii desu ne- [u-n] ano- keizaigaku to chigatte taishoo ga ha taishoo tte sono hakkiri shitenai gakumon dakara [u-n] ano- iroiro kangaeru koto ga dekiru n desu kedomo- sore ga kaette muzukashii to iu koto ga arimasu nè-*
- 3. FS: *a-n un soo ne- [un] ano- ano koogi to ha- enshuu wa eigo eigo ni [un] a-n hanashitemasu kara u-n ano muzukashii desu né*

(F108-N6:9)

- 1' FS: What do you think of your Politics subject?
- 2' NS: It's difficult. It's different to Economics as it is not a concrete subject. You can think about things in various ways, so, which makes it all the harder.
- 3' FS: Yes, that's true. The lectures and tutorials are in English, so they would be difficult to follow, wouldn't they?

The FS said that she did not understand (9.2). *Taishoo* 'object', *gakumon* 'study' and *kaette* 'rather' were certainly unknown to her. However, this does not mean that she did not understand anything at all. She must have picked up the basic word *muzukashii* 'difficult' and guessed that the NS thinks politics is a different subject. The question (9.3) is reasonably interpreted as an attempt to say something relevant to the key word.

Example 10

1. NS: *nihon ni kaette kizuita no wa- wariai fasshon moderu no yoo ni kirei na fukusoo shita hito ga ooi na oosutoraria ni kurabete (laugh) ooi na to omoimashita né [è-] oosutoraria de wa nani o kite mo minna nanni mo iimasen nè*
- 2. FS: *soo desu nè*
3. NS: *e- dakara daitai wakai hito wa jiipan o haiteru keredomo [un] dakedo nihon de a-to yahari ano iroiro fukusoo ryuukoo okure no fukusoo ki shitetara minna ni warawareru shì*

- 4. FS: *u-n oosutoraria de wa minna ano- tokubetsu oyoofuku o kiru no wa ano- yoru dake desu nê ano yoru ni night club ni- ittari [a`a`] soo iu toki ni ano ano tokubetsu na yoofuku o fasshon yoofuku o kiru da kiru kedo [e`e`e`]*

(F302-N1:32)

- 1' NS: Something I noticed when I returned to Japan was that, compared to Australians, many people are very well dressed – almost like fashion models. Here you can wear anything you like and it doesn't matter.
- 2' FS: Yes, that's true.
- 3' NS: So young people generally wear jeans, but in Japan, if you wear clothes that are out of fashion, you'll be laughed at.
- 4' FS: In Australia people only dress up at night to go to night clubs and those sorts of places.

There appears to be nothing wrong with this portion of the interview as far as the information exchanged is concerned. During the follow-up interview, however, the FS said she did not fully understand (10.1) and (10.3). Words such as *fukusoo* 'clothes', *ryuukoo okure* 'out of fashion', *warawareru* 'be laughed at', etc. no doubt caused her problems. Nevertheless her contribution in (10.4) fits well into the context. She succeeded in grasping the gist of the NS's utterance that Japanese people are well dressed while Australians do not care about clothes. It appears that she ignored the unintelligible part and hooked (10.4) to what she had understood.

In examples (9) and (10) the FSs attempt to develop a topic on the basis of what they have understood by ignoring the unintelligible parts of the utterances made by the NSs. In the following example the FS hooks her question to the word she does not know.

Example 11

(The NS is talking about the classroom behaviour of Japanese children in Japan and in Melbourne)

1. NS: *tatoeba ano- a- eigo o iretari hana[e`] shiteru toki eigo de un nattari sore toka saigo made a- umaku ienakattari [e`] seka- ma dake(do) ichiban chigau no ga ano taido ga chigau n desu né*
- 2. FS: *e- doo chigaimasu ká*

(F303-N1:60)

- 1' NS: For instance, they use English while speaking Japanese or they switch to English, or they can't complete sentences and so on. But the big difference is the difference in attitudes.
- 2' FS: Oh, yes, how do they differ?

The FS makes a very quick response to the NS's utterance. The rising intonation imposed upon *e-* clearly appears to indicate her surprise, and there is no pause between *e-* and the following question. Nobody would imagine that the FS does not understand the key word *taido* 'attitude'. The fact is, however, that she said she did not know the word.

Example 12

(The NS mentions that he has been granted a scholarship by the Australian government)

1. NS: *soo desu nē- oosutoraria ni wa on ga aru wake desu ne- nani ka shinai to dame desu* [(laugh)] *ato de kayasanai kaesanai to dame desu nē [ha]* .. ano .. oosutorariajin no zeikin o moratteru wake desu karà
- 2. FS: *(hai)* .. *ha- ni nihon no nihon no a- [hai]* *nihon no bukka bukka to- [hai]* oosutoraria no bukka wa .. *a- ona* |
3. NS: | *doo desu ka nē nihon no ..* [omitted]
(F104-N7:64)
- 1' NS: Yes, you see, I'm indebted to Australia. I must do something in return later because I'm using Australian taxes.
- 2' FS: Are Japanese and Australian prices (similar)?
- 3' NS: Let me see ... [omitted]

Ha interjected in (12.1) and *hai* in (12.2) are both accompanied by low voice, and they indicate that the FS has a comprehension problem. Initially the question (12.2) appeared to be a changing move motivated to avoid an RC. However, the follow-up interview indicated an alternative interpretation. The FS reported that he interpreted the FS's utterance as follows:

The NS obtained scholarship to come here, but the problem of exchange rate makes it not sufficient.

We do not know how the FS arrived at this interpretation. However, it is reasonable to assume that he picked up *dame desu* 'no good' which was used twice in (12.1): *nani ka shinai to dame desu* 'I must do something' and *kaesanai to dame desu* 'I must return it', and that he associated it with the scholarship; i.e. the scholarship is not sufficient. This proposition, together with his misunderstanding concerning 'exchange rate', in turn can be naturally linked with the problem of prices. Rather than a changing move, it thus seems likely that in (12.2) the FS was attempting to make an other-hooking move.

7.2.1.4 The strategy of passing

When the listener is offered a speaker turn and is unable to make a substantial contribution due to a comprehension problem, he may issue a passing move as a means of avoiding an RC. This avoidance move may be followed by another substantial move by the other speaker.

Example 13

(The speakers are talking about prices in Japan and Australia)

1. NS: *demo shokudoo nan ka dattara resutoran nan ka dattara nihon wa .. ano- yasui resutoran kara takai tokoro made takusan arimasu nē [ha-]* *ano raamen ippai taberaremasu kedo koko wa soo iu no wa anmari arimasen nē*

- 2. FS: (*hai soo desu ka*)
 3. NS: *hai*
 4. FS: (a long pause) *u-n ko kochira wa kochira wa a- kochira no- oosutorariajin wa [hai] a-n*
 [omitted]

(F104-N7:68)

- 1' NS: But as for places to eat – restaurants and the like, there are a whole range of places in Japan from really cheap to expensive ones. You can eat a bowl of noodles, but here you don't seem to have those types of places.
 -2' FS: I see.
 3' NS: Yeah.
 4' FS: Here ... Australia ...[omitted]

The FS issues feedback twice in this fragment. The first case appears in (13.1) after the NS's *takusan arimasu nee*. The FS is expected to take over the floor at this point and say something like *oosutoraria mo anaji desu yo* 'It's the same in Australia', but he utters *ha-* in a low voice. This is an attempt at RC avoidance and is most likely to be interpreted as a 'prompt'; the NS continues to talk.

The second feedback which is also intended to avoid an RC elicit counter-feedback to form the passing exchange of (13.2) and (13.3). This exchange of feedback constitutes possible pre-closing (Schegloff and Sacks 1973; Coulthard 1977); in other words, both speakers express that they have nothing more to say about the topic. In interviews it is normally the interviewer who advances the talk or terminates the interaction. In example (13), the FS goes on to introduce the new topic of automobiles in (13.4). In the example below, the FS interviewer uses a self-hooking move as an RC avoidance technique.

Example 14

(Talking about the difference between Japan and Australia)

1. NS: *u-n .. soo desu nè zenzen chigaimasu nè*
 2. FS: *u-n .. (ano-)*
 3. NS: *toku ni ano- jooshiki-teki na- koto o shiranai hito ga ooi desu nèè*
 -4. FS: *u-n*
 5. NS: *u-n̄*
 6. FS: *to uchi nò uchi no koto mō [eè] chigaimasu ká*

(F201-N2:60)

- 1' NS: Yes, they're completely different.
 2' FS: Uh huh.
 3' NS: In particular, there are a lot of people who lack common sense.

-4' FS: Mm.

5' NS: Mm.

6' FS: Are the houses also different?

The FS said she did not understand *jooshikiteki na koto* 'matter of common sense', but she avoided a request for explanation. Instead she utters *u-n*, which is responded to by counter-feedback by the NS. In the next turn, the FS is obliged to ask another question, which is hooked to the topic she has introduced.

In conversation where the participants are expected to share the burden of continuing the talk equally, we cannot predict who will take a turn after a possible pre-closing section. Silence may prevail and the participants may take out a cigarette while planning a course of action. Or, an exchange of feedback may be prolonged:

A: *toiu wake de ne iyaa taihen deshita yò*

B: *soo desu kà*

A: *eè*

B: *haá*

A: *u-ñ*

B: *naruhodo nêè*

A: *eè*

Aizuchi of acknowledgement are the simplest means of RC avoidance following assertive utterances. They may prompt the listener to talk further or, at least, they elicit counter-feedback. In either case, the speaker is given time to decide on a course of action. It is also important that passing expressions such as *haa*, *u-n*, etc. may be taken as implicit RCs and lead to self-correction by the listener.

However, in ordinary conversations, excessive use of passing moves as an RC avoidance technique hinders the development of conversation, and it may discourage the native speaker interlocutor from talking because he may feel he has to bear an undue share of the burden of controlling conversation. An exchange of passing moves is a possible pre-closing, and its frequent occurrence will result in the early termination of conversation. In this way, language learners are deprived of an important chance to learn from interacting with native speakers of the target language. They should be made aware of this point and should be encouraged to use more positive feedback whenever possible. Let us examine a case of such feedback:

Example 15

1. NS: *kono mae ano to a- oosutorariajin no hito to hanashitetarà oosuto a-no nan ka sukii suru iku no ni ano ya yadoya o kariyoo to omottara isshuukan de a- juu juunin a-futakazoku de iku node juunin hodo iku node juunin no are- yadoya o toroo to omottara isshuukan de senhappyaku doru datte itte mashita yó*

- 2. FS: *soo oosutoraria de | àà tottemo takai desu nè*
 3. NS: *| tottemo takai desu nè*
 -4. FS: *ano nihon yori mo oosutoraria no hoo ga zutto takai n desu*
 5. NS: *takai desu nêè*

(F302-N1:10)

- 1' NS: A while ago I was talking to an Australian who was telling me about going skiing for a week. Two families were going, so there were ten people, and they were going to stay in a guest house, but for the week, it would have cost them \$1,800.
 -2' FS: Yes, it's very expensive in Australia.
 3' NS: Yes, very expensive.
 -4' FS: Much more so than in Japan.
 5' NS: Yes, (that's for sure).

Takai desu 'It's expensive' is the gist of the rather long utterance (15.1). The FS responds to this with strong agreement. The exchanges in (15.2) – (15.3) and (15.4) – (15.5) make the interview very lively, although they are reiterations of the NS's message in (15.1). The FS said during the follow-up interview that the only thing she could understand in (15.1) was *isshuukan de senhappyaku doru* 'It costs 1,800 dollars a week' in the last section. She thus ignored the unintelligible section and yet appeared to succeed in conducting the interview pretty well.

The next example is also derived from the interview conducted by F302. She did not issue any RCs during the two interviews she engaged in. This is partly because of her higher level of proficiency, but it can partly be ascribed also to her use of avoidance strategies.

Example 16

1. NS: *maa shoogakkoo no toki wa hashiri- takatobi ga
sukoshi a-re |*
 -2. FS: *| hayakatta (n desu ka)*
 3. NS: *ano yo yokute a kurasu no daihyoo ni sare sarete a- de
zenkoo no are ni dasaremashita kedomo sore to- daigakujidai ni shoorinjikenpoō [u-n]
o yatte sorede nidan made tottè*
 -4. FS: *so honto desu ké*
 5. NS: *ee sore dake desu nè demo- zenzen jishin nai desu yō*
 6. FS: *ja hima na jikan ni nani o shimasu ká*

(F302-N1:16)

- 1' NS: While I was at primary school I was good at high jumping.
 -2' FS: You were fast, were you?

- 3' NS: I was good at it, and I was often chosen to represent the class to compete at the school sports. While I was in Uni I did *shorinjikenpo* as far as 2nd level.
- 4' FS: Oh, really?
- 5' NS: Yes, that's about it, but now I don't have any confidence at all.
- 6' FS: What do you do in your spare time?

It turned out during the follow-up interview that the FS did not know *shoorinjikenpoo* or *nidan*. She said while laughing that she had pretended to have understood (16.3).

It is noticeable here that the FS is always ready to take a turn. When the NS has trouble in finding a suitable word in (16.1), the FS quickly takes a turn and utters *hayakatta (n desu ka)* 'You mean you were fast?'. Although obviously she misunderstands the word *hashiri takotobi* 'high jump', this move indicates her willingness to talk, and this is what counts in conversation.

Example 17

(At the beginning of the interview the NS interviewer briefly introduces himself and invites questions from the FS).

1. FS: *ano- shitsurei desu ga ano naze soo iu wadai o kenkyuu shite imasu kâ*
2. NS: *e- watashi- no- o- e- semai e- mondai kanshin wa [un] shakaikaisoð* |
- 3. FS: | *nihon to*
oosutoraria no kuraberu tó
4. NS: *hikaku ni arimasu | hai*
- 5. FS: | *a hai a- soo desu ka*
6. NS: *e- maa sono tame ni desu nè ano- nihon de nō choosa to kochira no choosa to ryooohoo yaranakerya ikenai wake [u-n] desu nê .. de- (cough) watashi wa shakaigaku desu kara a- .. shakaigaku no tachiba kara a- soo iu mondai o [u-n] kenkyuu shite imasu ne*
- 7. FS: *u-n omoshirosoo desu nè*
8. NS: *omoshirosoo desu kâ* [(laugh)]

(N1 1-F207:8)

- 1' FS: I hope I'm not being rude, but why did you choose that research topic?
- 2' NS: The area I'm particularly interested in is social strata.
- 3' FS: Do you mean a comparison of Australian and Japanese (social strata)?
- 4' NS: Yes, I'm interested in comparison.
- 5' FS: Oh, I see.
- 6' NS: Yes, you see, I had to do surveys in both Japan and Australia. I'm in the field of sociology so I am doing research from a sociological viewpoint.
- 7' FS: Oh, that's interesting.
- 8' NS: Do you think so?

The FS reported that she did not understand what kind of research the NS was doing. Nevertheless, she says *omoshirosoo desu ne* 'That sounds interesting'. This expression can be used as a response only if one can vaguely understand what is being talked about. It is used several times in different interviews in our data, and it tends to invite further comment from the NSs.

The NS (N11) said during the follow-up interview that he was aware of the FS's comprehension problem with his utterance (17.6): the RC avoiding utterance (17.7) was made in a low voice and probably accompanied by nonverbal cues. (17.8) by the NS sounds teasing and both speakers laugh at the end of the fragment, admitting that the FS failed to avoid an RC. (17.7) is thus an unsuccessful attempt to conceal a comprehension problem, and this example suggests the importance of paralinguistic cues in communication. Nevertheless the failure does not seem to have produced any negative effect on the interview.

(17.3) is also worthy of attention in this connection. The FS did not know *semai mondai kanshin* 'question of my particular interest' and *shakai kaisoo* 'social strata', and yet she issued the relevant question before the NS finished his answer. She said during the follow-up interview that she had prepared to ask questions about his research and pre-planned the question. This is an example of what Neustupný (1973) calls pre-correction. (17.3) suggests that planning prior to the interaction may be helpful in avoiding RCs.

In 7.2.1 we have examined four types of conversational moves used by foreign speakers as strategies of avoiding RCs following assertive utterances. Passing is the easiest but the least positive avoidance strategy since it does not contribute to the development of conversation. Changing moves are the second easiest. Even if the listener is not certain about his understanding of the preceding utterance, he can issue acknowledgement and then initiate a topic change. In this connection he needs to accumulate a number of topics he can comfortably talk about.

However, in an ordinary conversation clearly marked topic changes are infrequent; as Hinds (1978:74) points out, '... topics often fade in and out ... but not completely away from the major point'. A capable conversationalist must be skilful at developing topic talk. In this regard, self- and other-hooking moves are more positive. They introduce or elicit new propositional content about the topic under discussion. They are more difficult to make because they presuppose a certain degree of understanding. However, the foreign speakers in our data, even learners at the lowest level, often appear to gain a certain degree of understanding. This being the case, they need to be encouraged to say something relevant to the topic on the basis of what they have understood. This is a risk-taking move, but, if it is judged to be a manifestation of misunderstanding, it will be followed by native speakers' self-correction. Alternatively, the foreign speakers' utterances will at least make the native speakers aware of their proficiency level and thereby prompt them to use foreigner talk for better communication.

7.2.2 RC avoidance following directives

Directive utterances such as questions, requests, commands, suggestions, etc. put the listener under an obligation to respond to them verbally or nonverbally. A response to a question, for instance, must be tied to the question. Otherwise, the questioner believes that the answerer has

misunderstood the question or is attempting to evade answering it. Due to this property of questions, the foreign speakers in our data more often than not make use of RCs when faced with a comprehension problem in this situation. Consequently, there are only a small number of instances of authoritative RC avoidance following questions. In this section we shall exemplify three avoidance strategies following directive triggers: other-hooking, evading, and holding.

7.2.2.1 The strategy of other-hooking

It is often the case that the listener understands a question except for one or two words. In such cases it is relatively easy to avoid an RC:

Example 18

1. NS: *saisho no shiken to iu no wa a- hikki shiken desu ka*
2. FS: *hai soo desu*
3. NS: *de- sore wa a- e- iroiro na a- bunya no chishiki o o- kiku wake desu ka*
- 4. FS: *hai soo desu*

(F11-F305:73)

- 1' NS: Is the initial exam a written one?
- 2' FS: Yes, that's right.
- 3' NS: And does that cover various topics in different fields?
- 4' FS: Yes, that's right.

The FS said during the follow-up interview that she did not fully understand (18.3). She knew, however, that the question was about *shiken* 'examination' and that *iroiro na* means 'various'. She said she inferred from these cues that the NS was asking whether the examination was designed to test various things, and gave a positive answer. The FS in this case attained quite a high degree of understanding, which enabled her to avoid an RC. In the next example the FS hedges her answer:

Example 19

1. NS: *eto- kanji o oboeru toki hitsujun nan ka oshiete moraimashita*
- 2. FS: *e- chotto demo .. u-n watashi wa kanji no hoo de wa (laugh) zenzen dame (na)*
3. NS: (laugh) *soo desu ka*
4. FS: *e-*

(N1-F301:63)

- 1' NS: When you learnt kanji, were you taught the stroke order and so forth?
- 2' FS: Yes, a little bit, but I'm not good at kanji at all.

3' NS: Oh, really?

4' FS: Yes, it's true.

Anyone who listens to this section of the audio tape would not believe that the FS has a comprehension problem. She said, however, that she did not know the word *hitsujun* 'stroke order'. We assume that she understood the question except for this word, and that she could at least infer that it referred to something to be learnt when she studied kanji.

Her answer 'Yes, a little bit' is very tactful. In addition, the following part 'I'm not good at kanji at all' further hedges her affirmative answer. The utterance may be intended to signal her unwillingness to talk about kanji learning.

In the next example, which is derived from preliminary data for the present study, the FS guesses the meaning of *tsukiau* 'associate with' as 'mix' and uses the English word in her own response.

Example 20

1. NS: *sono toshi ga ne ano- sono wakai hito wa ne [un] yoku oosutorariajin to tsukiau to ka ne [hai] ano toshiyori wa tsukiawanai to ka ne [soo soo] soo iu koto wa* |

-2. FS: | *arimasu*
tabun toshiyori ni no hito wa amari mikkusu shinai

3. NS: *mikkusu shinai*

4. FS: *soo*

(Preliminary data)

1' NS: About the ages ... young Japanese often get to know Australians but older people don't. Is there anything like ...

-2' FS: Yes, that's right. The older people don't tend to mix.

3' NS: They don't?

4' FS: No.

Prior to this segment of the interview the NS used the key word *tsukiau* eight times and the FS did not employ a single RC. However, the FS said during the follow-up interview that she did not know the word. The NS, on the other hand, said he believed that she knew it.

The comprehension problems in examples (18), (19) and (20) are problems of lexical meaning. The problem in the next example appears to be more serious.

Example 21

1. NS: *doo deshoo a- oosutoraria no shakai de josei no shakaiteki chii wa .. a- e- dono yoo ni i- kangaemasu ka*

2. FS: *ma- mada mada josei to dansei wa byoodoo de wa nai to omoimasu keredomo toku ni ano- katei- no hoomen de wa ano- josei ga mondai ga arimasu tatoeba [omitted] otôosan no hoo ga shigoto o yamete [hai] sono akachan no sewa o suru yoo ni naru deshoo*
3. NS: *e-to sore wa ano- e- oosutoraria no o- dansei no naka ni mo e- josei to dansei no o-chigai- ... ga atte mo shikata ga nai to iu kangae ga aru wake deshoo kà*
- 4. FS: *... ma- ano- sono joseikaihoo undoo no naka ni mo ano dansei no hi dansei mo imasu keredomo .. ano- .. ma- shikata ga nai- .. to chigau n deshoo nê` ano- ma- .. oozei no hito wa .. a- fuhei o ittara shakai no seido o kaeru koto ga dekiru deshoo*
5. NS: *.... ano- josei ni ichiban ninki no aru shigoto tte iu no wa nan deshoo*
(N11-F401:35)
- 1' NS: What do you think of women's social position in Australian society?
- 2' FS: I don't feel that there is equality between the sexes yet, particularly with respect to the homefront. There are still plenty of problems there for women. [omitted] It might be that in future fathers may give up their jobs and look after their children at home.
- 3' NS: Does that mean that among Australian men there are some who hold the view that sexual discrimination is unavoidable?
- 4' FS: Well, within the women's liberation movement there are men. Well, I guess it's not unavoidable. If many people complain about social injustices, the social institutions could be altered.
- 5' NS: What's the most popular job among women?

In (21.2) the FS says in effect that sex discrimination still remains in Australia, particularly at home, but in future fathers will take care of their babies while their wives go out to work. The NS admitted during the follow-up interview that he could not follow the FS in (21.2) and lost the thread of the discourse. (21.3) was an RC intended to elicit clarification from the FS. The FS, on the other hand, said she could not fully understand this RC. Most probably she did not realise that the NS had a comprehension problem. She said she picked up the phrase *shikata ga nai* 'That cannot be helped' in the question and used it in her answer. The fact was that in (21.4) the FS was struggling to produce a relevant utterance to the question while avoiding an RC.

The following extract contains a long sequence of exchanges in which both participants fail to communicate effectively.

Example 22 (cf. example (37) in Chapter 6)

1. NS: *nihongo o benkyoo shitete doo iu tokoro ga muzukashii desu ká*
2. FS: *hai kânji wa | muzukashii desù |*
3. NS: *| kanji ga muzuka | shiĩ*
4. FS: *hai*

5. NS: *fu-n soo desu nê hatsuon wa doo desu kà ... | hatsuon*
 6. FS: *| hatsuon wa nan desu kà*
 7. NS *ano- .. u-n .. shaberu u-n.. nan te iu kashira .. u-n a i u e o ka ki ku ke ko to*
iu hiragana yarimashita nè [a-] zenbu iemasu ká
 8. FS: *a-*
 9. NS: *u-n dore ka .. dekinai oto arimasu ká*
 -10. FS: *haī*
 11. NS: *zenbu dekimasu ká*
 12. FS: *u-*
 13. NS: *dore ga iemasen ká*
 14. FS: *... u-n kanji*
 15. NS: *u-n tatoeba kya kyu kyo ttoka iemasu ká*
 16. FS: *hai | kya*
 17. NS: *| iemasu ká muzukashii ōto arimasu ká*
 -18. FS: *....iie*
 19. NS: *iie arimaseh zenbu | iemasu ká |*
 20. FS: *| zenbu | hai*
 21. NS: *ano- nihon no oto to iu no wa zenbu iemasu ká ... sound\$.. otò*
 22. FS: *a` hai*

(N2-F105:117)

- 1' NS: What sort of things are difficult about studying Japanese?
 2' FS: Kanji is difficult.
 3' NS: Kanji, did you say?
 4' FS: Yes.
 5' NS: I see. What about pronunciation?
 6' FS: What do you mean by 'pronunciation'?
 7' NS: Well, when you are talking ... How should I explain it, I wonder? ... You have done all the sounds in the syllabary – a, i, u, e, o, ka, ki, ku, ke, ko, haven't you? Can you pronounce all of them?
 8' FS: Um...
 9' NS: Are there any that you can't pronounce?
 -10' FS: Yes.

- 11' NS: Can you say them all?
 12' FS: Um.
 13' NS: Which one can't you pronounce?
 14' FS: Um... kanji?
 15' NS: For example, can you say sounds like kya, kyu, kyo and so on?
 16' FS: Yes 'kya'.
 17' NS: Are there any that are difficult to pronounce?
 -18' FS: No.
 19' NS: So you can say them all?
 20' FS: Yes, all of them.
 21' NS: So you can pronounce all the sounds in Japanese. *Oto* means 'sounds'.
 22' FS: Yes.

The NS wants to know whether Japanese sounds are difficult for the FS to pronounce. She is willing to help the FS, but she appears to have a strategy of not using English. She makes several attempts to get the question across without using English words until the interview comes to a stalemate in (22.21), where she finally gives the English equivalent for *oto* 'sound'. Because of this correction strategy of the NS and the FS's low level of proficiency, both participants are having a great deal of trouble from (22.7) to (22.21).

In (22.7), instead of giving a direct reply to the FS's RC about the word *hatsuon* 'pronunciation', the NS changes the original question in order to avoid the word. She asks whether the FS can pronounce all *hiragana* 'the Japanese syllabary'. This correction is not helpful in enabling the FS to guess the original question. Then, the NS issues a second correction in (22.9) which contains another unknown word *oto*. In response, however, the FS utters *hai* in (22.10). This affirmative reply contradicts the truth: she really thinks she has no difficulty in pronouncing Japanese sounds. It is not plausible that the FS simply misunderstands the question. Rather, it seems that she is still faced with a problem and is avoiding a clear RC.

Hai in (22.10) is pronounced with a somewhat hesitant tone, and the NS judges that the FS does not understand the question fully. The succeeding four turns of the NS are all attempts to confirm the FS's reply in (22.10). Her persistent attempts are finally responded to with *iie* 'No' in (22.18). At this point the FS still does not understand the word *oto*, and on these grounds we assume that she is avoiding an RC here again.

The FS's answer still does not convince the NS: she attempts to confirm it in (22.19). In (22.21) she gives up her correction strategy and provides the English equivalent for *oto*, which clears up the FS's problem. *A-* in (22.22) sounds as if she has now understood what has been asked.

This section of the interview was not discussed during the follow-up interview. However, it is apparent that the participants have difficulty in communicating and that the FS feels hesitation in issuing frequent RCs. We assume that (22.10) and (22.18) are intended to avoid RCs.

Example 23 (cf. example (8) in Chapter 6)

(The FS tells the NS that he is teaching at high school and his students are noisy in class)

1. NS: *saikin wa kookoosei ga zuibun sensei o ijimetari suru soo desu nê*
2. FS: *ano*
3. NS: *kookoosei ga nê*
4. FS: *hai hai*
5. NS: *gakusei ga [uñ] sensei o ano ijimerù*
6. FS: *ijimerù*
7. NS: *uñ sensei ni .. sensei o karakattarî*
8. FS: *.. karakattarî*
9. NS: *.. hen na koto o ittarî*
10. FS: *hai*
11. NS: *hen na shitsumon-[hai] o shitari*
- 12. FS: *hai hai un .. (soo desu) â- an ano- a- .. n- .. a- a-no- juuyonsai no kodomo o a- .. oshieru no wa- a-n .. n- muzukashii*
13. NS: *fu-n.... donna shumi o omochi desu ká*

(N4-F102:59)

- 1' NS: Apparently high school students have been bullying their teachers recently.
- 2' FS: Er...
- 3' NS: High school students have
- 4' FS: Uh huh.
- 5' NS: The students have been bullying their teachers.
- 6' FS: Bullying?
- 7' NS: Um, they have been teasing their teachers.
- 8' FS: Teasing?
- 9' NS: Heckling them in class.
- 10' FS: Uh huh.
- 11' NS: Asking rude questions and so forth.
- 12' FS: Oh, I see. Um...er...um... So fourteen year olds are difficult to teach.
- 13' NS: Mm... What are your hobbies?

(23.1) is a declarative sentence, but it is obviously intended to elicit a comment about high school students. Thus, we regard it as a directive utterance.

The FS issues three RCs: an interjective RC in (23.2) and an echo-type RC in (23.6) and (23.8), but his comprehension problem is not solved by the NS's corrective utterances. He said during the follow-up interview that he did not understand what the NS was getting at, and that in (23.12) he tried to say something he thought relevant to the topic.

Above we have presented examples of the strategy of other-hooking following questions. More advanced learners are more successful than lower level learners in their attempts to avoid RCs because the processes of guessing and ignoring requires a certain degree of understanding of the utterances in question. As examples (22) and (23) suggest, native speakers' correction may at times confuse the foreign speakers rather than solve their problems, and in such situations the foreign speakers tend to avoid using RCs repeatedly. This is probably because of the general norm in conversation: avoid persistent use of RCs.

7.2.2.2 The strategy of evasion

In response to a question the listener may be able to avoid an RC by using such expressions as *Muzukashii mondai desu ne* 'It's a difficult question', *Yoku wakarimasen* 'I don't know', *Kangaeta koto ga arimasen* 'I've never thought of that', etc. This is called the strategy of evasion.

Example 24 (= example (1) in Chapter 2)

1. NS: *a- e-to oosutorariajin no kokuminsei to nihonjin no kokuminsei no chigai .. nani ka kanjita koto arimasu ka*
- 2. FS: *e- demo chotto muzukashii [fu-n] .. doko ga chigau ka [fu-n] .. chotto iu no wa muzukashii[a-] to omou*
3. NS: *... e-to .. nihongo .. are- donna koto ga muzukashii desu ka nihongo*
(N1-F301:53)
- 1' NS: Does anything in particular strike you about the differences in national characteristics between Japanese and Australians?
- 2' FS: Yes, but it's difficult to say exactly what it is.
- 3' NS: What do you find difficult about the Japanese language?

The FS explained during the follow-up interview that since she did not know the word *kokuminsei* 'national characteristics', she was unable to answer the question. The NS, on the other hand, said that she at first assumed that the word might be unknown to the FS, but upon hearing her response she believed that the question was understood. In (24.2) the FS is trying to evade answering the question instead of requesting clarification about it and succeeds in the attempt.

(24.2) is the only authoritative example of evasion in our data. However, there are two other cases identified in preliminary data.

Example 25

1. NS: *ano- tatoeba ano- igirisujin toka amerikajin toka ne [hai] oosutorariajin ni kurabete ne [hai] ano- nihon no hito ni so nihonjin no gaikokujin ni taisuru [hai] taido ne aruiwa gaikoku no shakai ni [un] taisuru taido ga ne [un] dokka chigatteru toka soo iu koto nan ka atta*
- 2. FS: *u-n soo u-n muzukashii to omou wakaranai honto ni kenkyuu shimashita ga hakkiri waku koto wa muzukashii*
- (Preliminary data)
- 1' NS: Have you found that the attitude the Japanese have towards foreigners and foreign societies, is somehow different to that of the English, Americans and Australians?
- 2' FS: That's difficult to say. I don't know. I have really studied this but it is hard to come up with definite answers.

The FS said she could not understand the question and so she said *muzukashii* and *wakaranai*. It is likely that she did not know the word *taido* 'attitude', but she employed a strategy of waiting and missed the opportunity to issue an RC. In (25.2) there is a long pause after the first sentence *muzukashii to omou*, and this pause may be intended to elicit clarification. The same FS uses a strategy of evasion again in the following context:

Example 26

1. NS: *ano- shoosha toka meekaa no hito wa dono kurai ita*
- 2. FS: *soo a-n shoosha no hito wa hitori amerika de u-n sannen doitsugo de mo sun sunda koto ga arimasu [un un] hoka no wa adereedo ni ano- nihongo oshieteru hito wa M sensei no tomodachi*
3. NS: *demo so ano- M sensei*
4. FS: *kanojo wa amerika ni sunda koto ga arimasu*
5. NS: *u-n de (mo)*
6. FS: *kanojo wa shoosha no hito ja nai*
7. NS: *ja nai desho u-n*
8. FS: *u-n*
9. NS: *shoosha no hito dono kurai ita no*
- 10. FS: *u-n dono kurai oboete nai*
11. NS: *oboete nai no [(laugh)] moo kaitara minna wasure chatta*
12. FS: *(laugh) takusan kaita wa yominna oboerarenai*

(Preliminary data)

- 1' NS: (In your data) how many people working for trading firms and manufacturers were there?
- 2' FS: There was one businessman in a trading firm who had lived in America for three years and also lived in Germany. Another one who teaches Japanese in Adelaide is Miss M's friend.
- 3' NS: But Miss M is ...
- 4' FS: She has also lived in America.
- 5' NS: Yes, but ...
- 6' FS: She is not working for a company.
- 7' NS: No, she's not, is she?
- 8' FS: That's right.
- 9' NS: So how many business people were there?
- 10' FS: I don't remember how many.
- 11' NS: You don't remember? You mean after you wrote it all down you forgot?
- 12' FS: (laugh) I wrote down so much that I couldn't remember everything!

The follow-up interview revealed that the FS heard *meekaa* 'manufacturer' as *amerika* 'America'. Due to this misperception she could not understand the question. Nevertheless, in (26.2) she is using a strategy of other-hooking: she is saying something related to *shoosha* 'trading firm' and *amerika*. In answer to the repetition of the question in (26.9) she says *Oboetenai* 'I don't remember'. As for this utterances, she said during the follow-up interview that she avoided giving a direct answer because she was not sure about how this question was related to the initial question of (26.1).

7.2.2.3 The strategy of holding

The listener must take a turn when asked a question. If he hesitates to answer it, the hesitation is interpreted as a sign of a comprehension problem or a production problem. Whichever the interpretation, a long pause or the repeated use of pause fillers tend to prompt the other speaker to take a turn. This means that the listener having a comprehension problem can manipulate pause and pause-fillers, pretending to have a production problem, and may thereby be able to elicit self-correction from the other speaker.

Example 27

1. NS: *nihonjin to oosutorariajin de wa aisatsu no shikata toka desu ne² aizuchi no uchikata-ni chigai aru to omou n desu ga² nani ka ki ga tsuita koto arimasu ka² .. aisatsu aruiwa-aizuchi no uchikata desu ne²*
- 2. FS: *ha-* (sigh) *u-n maa takusan aru n desu ne²* [(laugh)]

3. NS: *mazu chotto o omoshiroi koto demo dashite kuremasu kâ omoshiroi aa koo iu ten ni tokuchoo ga aru (no ka) t toka nê- nihonjin no tokuchoo toka- aizuchi mazu aisatsu kara*
- 4. FS: *maa soo desu ne wata(ku) shi ga ki ga tsuita no wa [omitted]*
(N15-F407:81)
- 1' NS: I've noticed that there are differences between the way Japanese and Australians use greetings and 'feedback'. Is there anything that you have noticed about this?
- 2' FS: Well, there are lots of things. [(laugh)].
- 3' NS: Can you tell me something interesting – a feature perhaps, that's particularly Japanese? Starting with greetings.
- 4' FS: Well, one thing that I have noticed is [omitted].

Although this fragment of discourse was not discussed during the follow-up interview, we know that the FS did not know the word *aizuchi* 'feedback'. Therefore, he is faced with a comprehension problem in (27.2). We do not know how seriously he took it, but, in any case, the problem was not so serious as to impair the smooth flow of communication: he could have used an other-hooking move related to *aisatsu* 'greetings'. The point to be made here is that, before the FS provides any substantial move, the NS takes up his turn and utters virtually the same message. (27.2) thus serves as a means of avoiding an RC following a question.

Example 28

1. NS: *daigaku ni e- shingaku suru koto .. tsumari daigaku ni e- susumu koto wa a- minna neshin desu kâ*
2. FS: *... neshin toka .. e- u-n*
3. NS: *ooku no hito ga daigaku ni e- susumitai shingaku shitai to iu kiboo o motte imasu kâ*
4. FS: *.... kiboo ga aru soo desu ga ano- .. saikin ano- shuushoku suru koto wa dandan muzukashiku natte ittarâ*
5. NS: *sore wa ano daigaku o dete mō muzukashiku natte kite iru to iu | koto desu kâ*
6. FS: *| u-n*
7. NS: *hai*
- 8. FS: *uñ uñ (sigh) ano u-n (long pause) (laugh) e-*
9. NS: *e- tatoeba a- hito ni yotte wa .. amari daigaku .. u- ni kodomo ga a- iku koto o desu nê [u-ñ] a- nozomanai [u-n] .. soo iu e- oya mo iru tte iu fuu ni kikimasu keredomo [u-ñ] doo deshoð*
10. FS: *kochira dé*
11. NS: *hai oosutoraria dè*

(N11-F207:61)

- 1' NS: Is everyone keen to go on to university from high school?
- 2' FS: Keen?
- 3' NS: Do you think that most people want to continue on to university?
- 4' FS: I hear that there are a lot of people wanting to do that. Recently it's becoming increasingly difficult to find employment.
- 5' NS: Do you mean that even if you graduate from university it's becoming more difficult to do so?
- 6' FS: Yes.
- 7' NS: I see.
- 8' FS: Um ... er ... um ...
- 9' NS: For example, I've heard that there are some parents who don't particularly want their children to continue on to university. What do you think about this?
- 10' FS: Here, you mean?
- 11' NS: Yes, in Australia.

(28.8) consists of long pauses and pause-fillers. The NS reported during the follow-up interview that he thought the FS had a production problem during the turn. On the basis of this comment we assume that the NS took the turn in (28.9), intending to assist the FS by filling an embarrassing pause. The FS, on the other hand, said that she had a comprehension problem. During the follow-up interview she explained that she was totally blank at this moment and could do nothing at all. The pauses were due to her comprehension problem. Although it is not clear that the FS intentionally used the strategy of holding in (28.8), this may well have been the case.

An interesting remark was made here concerning non-verbal behaviour: the FS said that she was looking out of the window in (28.8). It may be that the shifted eye-contact led the NS to believe that she had a production problem (cf. Laver and Hutcheson 1972; Duncan 1974).

Pause-fillers are needed to hold a turn. Note that native speakers of Japanese use expressions like the following for this purpose:

1. Nonverbal sounds: *e-, a-, n-, etc.* um
2. Interjections: *ma-* well
3. Deictic words: *ano-, sono-, kono-* well
4. Phrasal expressions:

<i>soo desu ne-</i>	let me see
<i>nan tte iu ka</i>	} what shall I say?
<i>doo ieba ii no ka naa</i>	
etc.	

These expressions can be combined to form a long utterance: *soo desu ne ma- nan tte iu ka sono- nan desu ne-*. The listener may even go a step further by using expressions such as the following to return the speaking turn:

Tatoeba, doo iu koto deshoo ka.
Could you give me some examples?

Gutaiteki ni iimasu to ...
Could you be a more specific?

With such expressions he conveys that he is unable to answer the question not because of comprehension problems but because the question is too vaguely formulated.

This section has discussed three strategy types which can be used to avoid an RC following directive triggers. The follow-up interviews have proved that foreign speakers venture to answer a question on the basis of a guess. This strategy was termed other-hooking. A less frequent strategy is to evade answering a question by saying 'I don't know', 'I forgot', etc. The third strategy is holding, which expresses not a comprehension problem but a production problem, intending thereby to elicit self-correction from the other speaker.

7.2.3 The waiting strategy

The avoidance strategies discussed in the previous sections are employed when the speaking turn is passed to the listener. However, there is also a strong tendency in our data for foreign speakers to refrain from issuing RCs during the turn of the other speaker. Rather, they employ a waiting strategy as demonstrated in the following excerpt:

Example 29

(The FS asks what parts of Australia the NS has been to. The NS answers that she has been to Hobart, Tasmania, and tries to explain why she went there).

1. NS: [1] *ano ne ano koro nee ano- .. ryokoogaisha ni- imashitê [u-n]*
- [2] *ano oshigoto de tasumania ni itta n desu sono toki wa ne nihon kara e- takusan yaoyasanga kimashitâ .. [aha-]*
- [3] *yaoyasan no ano ringo o nê oosutoraria no ringo [hai]*
- [4] *nihon ni yushutsu suru tame ni sono- .. shitashirabe to iu n desu ká oosutoraria no ringoen o kengaku ni kita n desu .. [ha-]*
- [5] *soredê tasumania ni wa ringo ga takusan aru n desu tte nê [o-]*
- [6] *sorede ano- tasumania hôbaato no ringoen o futatsu gurai mite mawarimashitâ*

-2. FS: *soo desu kà* (laugh)
a-ñ

3. NS: *riisan wá doko ni irasshaimashita ká*

(F109-N3:30)

1' NS: [1] At that time I was working for a travel company.

[2] I went to Tasmania through this work when a large group of Japanese greengrocers came.

[3] These greengrocers were researching the

[4] possibility of importing apples from Australia, and went to visit apple orchards.

[5] And many apples are grown in Tasmania, do you know?

[6] So we went and visited two apple orchards in Tasmania.

2' FS: Oh, really? (laugh)

3' NS: Where did you visit?

The FS said during the follow-up interview that she had a great deal of trouble in understanding the NS's long utterance. She reported that the NS went to an orchard in Tasmania and that according to the NS apples there are very good. But she did not understand what brought the NS there. It is unlikely that the FS knows the words *yaoyasan*, *shitashirabe*, *kengaku*, *ringoen*, *mite mawaru*.. Despite this, she did not issue an explicit RC. She mentioned that she thought it was not polite to use too many RCs.

The FS issues feedback five times before the NS terminates her long turn. *hai* in [3] is clearly a Japanese response word. *O-* in [5] sounds like the English exclamation 'oh!'. These two feedback expressions appear to indicate that she has attained some understanding. *Aha* in [2] also sounds like English 'uh huh' which she tends to use as acknowledgement of the receipt of a message. *Ha-* in [4] also seems to be acknowledgement. These two examples in [2] and [4] are intended to prompt the NS to speak more while avoiding RCs: they are examples of waiting. However, the strategy of waiting does not solve her problems: she is at a loss when the NS passes the turn to her. In (29.2) she says *soo desu ka* 'Is that so?' with laughter, which quite often implies that the speaker is in trouble.

The RC avoidance in (29.2) is an inevitable consequence; it requires a great deal of bravery to say 'I beg your pardon' after such a long turn. If the FS could have issued explicit RCs (*Yaoyasan?* 'What's yaoyasan?', for instance), the discourse might have developed in a different way.

The NS reported during the follow-up interview that she had difficulty in explaining why she went to Tasmania. Before finishing half of the turn, she noticed that the FS was not following and she wanted to reorganise the answer. She thus repeated the gist of it in [5] and [6]. It is quite evident that the fragment contains several attempts by the NS to help the FS to understand.

The NS uses what we call RC invitation. By this we refer to an attempt by the speaker to check the listener's understanding, which can be paraphrased as something like 'Are you following me?' or 'Ask me if you don't understand'. This message is usually conveyed by nonverbal cues (probably eye-contact is the most vital), often reinforced by such final particles as *ne*, *nee*, *nee*, *no deshoo*, *deshoo*, etc. The listener is expected to respond to the invitation quickly. Failure to issue proper feedback or noticeably delayed feedback are apt to be interpreted as signs of comprehension problems, lack of interest, inattention, etc. (Mizutani 1979). Therefore native speakers, in response to such invitations, intentionally issue delayed feedback with a hesitant tone in order to convey a comprehension problem.

In example (29) two-dot pauses appear at the end of sections [2] and [4]. It seems that during these pauses the NS intends to check the FS's understanding, i.e. the NS invites an RC from the FS. Such an RC invitation enables the listener faced with a comprehension problem to decide whether he will issue an RC or use a waiting strategy. The FS in the example was reluctant to issue an RC and employed a waiting strategy. However, the examples of delayed feedback (*aha-* in [2] and *ha-* in [4]) are likely to have been taken as implicit RCs.

The waiting strategy discussed in this section cannot be evaluated as either good or bad without qualification. However, example (29) suggests that foreign learners of Japanese need to develop sensitivity to RC invitations and the ability to respond appropriately. If they think they are following the talk, they should clearly indicate that they are. If not, they should indicate their problem either by an explicit or implicit RC. This will be of great help to native speakers who are uncertain whether they can continue to talk or whether they should stop to repair the communication breakdown.

7.3 RC users and RC avoiders

Foreign speakers, and for that matter native speakers as well, make much use of guesswork to attain a 'tolerable degree' of understanding. However, what constitutes a 'tolerable degree' differs from person to person, not to mention the situational and contextual constraints discussed earlier. Some foreign speakers feel uneasy when faced with comprehension problems and tend to resort to RCs to solve them. On the other hand, there are others who are easily satisfied with their degree of understanding and do not show great concern when confronted with comprehension problems. The former speaker type is here called an **RC user** and the latter an **RC avoider**. In our data, as shown in Table 7.1, some foreign speakers issue RCs even when they do not need to (i.e. they issue RCs in response to assertive triggers), whereas others issue RCs only when they are forced to. Among level I learners, F103 and F104 appear to be heavy RC users, and F108 used RCs with markedly less frequency, and all her RCs were issued in response to directive triggers. Judging from her competence in Japanese, this RC frequency is unexpectedly low, and this suggests that she depended heavily on RC avoidance strategies. In what follows we shall scrutinise one entire paragraph, in which she is interviewing, in order to discover how she manages to carry out her task while coping with comprehension problems.

Table 7.1: Foreign speakers and RCs following assertives

Proficiency level	FS Ref. No.	Total No. of RC turns	Total No. of RCs following assertives	Relative frequency of RCs following assertives (%)
I	F 101	17	3	17.6
	102	14	8	57.1
	103	14	9	64.3
	104	6	4	66.6
	105	6	1	16.7
	106	17	5	29.4
	107	6	2	33.3
	108	3	0	0
	109	8	1	12.5
	110	14	0	0
	111	7	4	57.1
	Sub-total	112	37	33.0
II	F 201	3	0	0
	202	1	0	0
	203	15	4	26.7
	204	2	0	0
	205	0	0	0
	206	10	6	60.0
	207	9	0	0
	Sub-total	40	10	25.0
III	F 301	2	2	100
	302	0	0	0
	303	5	5	100
	304	2	1	50
	305	4	0	0
	306	0	0	0
	Sub-total	13	8	61.5
IV	F 401	0	0	0
	402	1	1	100
	403	0	0	0
	404	7	4	57.1
	405	0	0	0
	406	3	0	0
	407	3	1	33.3
	Sub-total	14	6	42.9
G. Total		179	61	34.1

Example 30 Segment 1

1. FS: *ānō- .. ano sixty minutes no bangumi a- ano-*
 2. NS: *kinoó*
 3. FS: *u- ano- soo nē- kinoo no sixty minutes no sumoo* [laugh] *sumoo- o mimashita ká*
 4. NS: *iya-n doo deshita ka*
 5. FS: *ano-*
 6. NS: *shinjirarenai*
 - 7. FS: *hai keredomo [un] u-n*
- (F108-N6:33)

- 1' FS: Did you see 'Sixty Minutes'?
- 2' NS: Was it on last night?
- 3' FS: Yes, last night they had sumo wrestling on the show. Did you see that?
- 4' NS: Yes. What did you think of it?
- 5' FS: Well ...
- 6' NS: It's hard to believe, isn't it?
- 7' FS: Yes, but um ...

The FS asks whether the NS had watched the current affairs T.V. programme 'Sixty Minutes' which broadcast a segment on the daily lives of sumo wrestlers in Japan the night previous to the interview. This move is an introduction to a new paragraph. In response, the NS asks for her comment about the programme in (30.4). When the FS is about to reply, the NS says *Shinjirarenai* 'Unbelievable, isn't it?', which pre-empts the FS's answer. The FS replies with *Hai* 'Yes' and immediately adds *keredomo* 'but' to hold the floor. During the follow-up interview, she said that she did not understand the word but she guessed its meaning. While she did not understand *shinjirarenai*, she correctly interpreted its communicative function as a pre-emption, which enabled her to avoid an RC and hold the floor.

Example 30 Segment 2

7. FS: *hai keredomo [un] u-n*
8. NS: *boku wa ano- sumoo no sosaetii ga né [uñ soo nè] ano- jibun no risoo to suru shakai da to omottemasu*
- 9. FS: *un soo desu kà* [(laugh)]
ano- kinoo no bangumi wa- doo desu ká
- 7' FS: Yes, but um ...
- 8' NS: You know, I think the traditional sumo society is the ideal society.
- 9' FS: Oh, really? (laugh) What did you think of the programme last night?

The FS said she did not understand the key phrase *risoo to suru shakai* 'ideal society'. In (30.9) she acknowledges the NS's comment and then asks for his opinion about the programme. These two moves (feedback and self-hooking) are motivated to avoid an RC. It may be that she somehow senses his positive attitude toward the traditional world of sumo wrestlers and is satisfied with her impression.

Incidentally, *soo ne* 'That's right' uttered as a short response in (30.8) is inappropriate at this point of the discourse: she should have said *ee*, *hai* or other acknowledgement feedback. It seems that she interpreted the rising intonation of *ne* in *sosaetii ga ne* as feedback elicitation and reacts to it accordingly. If this is the case, she can be said to be a good listener although her Japanese ability is still very limited.

Example 30 Segment 3

9. FS: *ano- kinoo no bangumi wa- doo desu ká*
10. NS: *ano- yappari oosutorariajin (ni) wa shokku datta n ja naí [û-n] ano- tatoeba boo de [e] buttari né [èèèèè] ano hippataitari né [un] soide ano- dohyoo tte aru deshoó [un] rinku né [uhuh] asoko de koo korogattari toka sa .. moo demokurashii ga zenzen nai deshoó asoko ni wà de démokurashi demôku | rashii*
- 11. FS: | a soð soð [(laugh)]
- 9' FS: What did you think of the programme last night?
- 10' NS: It was probably a bit shocking for Australians. For instance the wrestler hit and struck the other wrestlers with sticks and they rolled in the ring. There's no democracy in that.
- 11' FS: You're right! (laugh)

It is evident that the FS makes the most of *aizuchi*, which she uses six times while the NS holds the floor in (30.10). The first *u-n* is pronounced clearly with heavy stress, which sounds as if she strongly agrees with him. *Eeeee*, which signals that 'I know it', is a response to *boo de buttari ne* 'to strike with a stick'. This phrase is most certainly unknown to her, so that we assume that the speaker made gestures of a 'stick' and 'hitting'. *Hippataku* 'hit' and *dohyoo* 'the arena' are also unlikely to be known to her. To these words she responds with *un* in a low voice. The fragment amply demonstrates that she is capable of using *aizuchi* effectively.

The NS here is the most frequent user of English words among the native speaker subjects. English words are helpful for foreign speaker listeners when they are used as a means of post-correction. *Rinku* 'rink' in (30.10) is an example of such usage. However, English words in Japanese sentences can also be sources of comprehension problems. They are often pronounced differently so that foreign speaker listeners do not realise that they are English and have difficulty in understanding them. Also there is a problem in that the correct English word here would be 'ring', not 'rink'. *Demokurashii* 'democracy' in (30.10) was not understood at first. Foreign speakers may realise that English words are being used so long as they understand the rest of the elements in the utterance, but those who are already facing comprehension problems are apt to be further confused by such Japanised English words.

Example 30 Segment 4

11. FS: | a soð soð [(laugh)]
12. NS: *né nai desu yo né [hai] dakara osoraku oosutorariajin (ni) wa shokku datta to omoimasu yo [u-ñ] demo boku wa sono .. itsumo- itsumo tte iu yori sono- nan te iu ka na aa iu sosaetii de miryoku o kanjimasu miryoku o kanjiru tte iu no wa suki desu nè [u-ñ] uñ*
13. FS: *un hai hai wakarimasu*
- 11' FS: You're right. (laugh).
- 12' NS: You see, no democracy. That's why I feel it would probably be shocking to Australians. But I somehow feel that that kind of society has more of an attraction than normal society. I mean I like it.
- 13' FS: Yes, yes, I see what you mean.

The FS said that she had difficulty in understanding (30.12). She did not know *miryoku o kanjiru* 'feel attracted'. Despite the problem, she responds to the utterance with *Hai hai wakarimasu* 'Yes, yes, I understand'. Probably she picks up the basic word *suki* 'like' and guesses what the NS wants to say. (30.13) is another example of the passing strategy.

Example 30 Segment 5

14. NS: *u-n kedo serufu disipurin tte iu no ga [hai] asuko de wa tsune ni inpootanto natteru deshó [u-ñ] dakara totemo miryoku ga arimasu nè [u-ñ] uñ*
15. FS: *ano- oosutorariajin no ripootaa wa yoku wakaranai*
- 14' NS: In that society, self-discipline is vital, and that is what appeals.
- 15' FS: The Australian reporter didn't really understand.

It is reasonable to assume that the FS was not confident of her understanding of (30.14). Nevertheless she uses a strategy of self-hooking in (30.15) to conceal her comprehension problem.

Example 30 Segment 6

16. NS: *u-n wakaranai n ja nai [u-ñ] ano- supootsu wa are wa ekusuperiensu ga nai to chotto wakaranai koto da tomoù*
17. FS: *soo desu nè [u-ñ] u-n
ano ne a u-n ano- shumi wa nan desu ka*
- 16' NS: Yes, I'm sure he didn't understand it. With that kind of sport you really have to have experience before you can understand it.
- 17' FS: Yes, that's right. Um, what are your hobbies?

(30.17) terminates the paragraph about the T.V. programme and introduces a new topic about hobbies. The lengthy example (30) clearly shows that F108 encounters many new words and phrases, but she appears to cope with comprehension problems by using the strategies of waiting, passing and self-hooking fairly extensively.

Close examination of the paragraph has shown that the FS is a heavy user of the RC avoidance strategy, and we may wonder how much information the FS has gained from the NS's utterances with her very limited knowledge of Japanese. Nevertheless, we may agree that she is a good interviewer. She selects a timely topic and uses *aizuchi* skilfully to prompt the NS to talk. A friendly atmosphere prevails in the interview. Example (30) supports the argument that a good conversationalist is not necessarily one who possesses a good knowledge of lexico-grammatical rules; it is strategic competence that counts.

Table 7.1 shows that F303 presents a sharp contrast with F108 in her use of RCs. Not that F303 does not employ avoidance strategies; indeed she uses self-hooking and other-hooking in examples (6) and (11) respectively. The point here is that her RCs were all issued in contexts where they could have been easily avoided. How can we account for this difference among foreign speakers in our data, and how is it related to language learning? Some hypotheses are formulated below:

- (1) Personality may affect the strategic use and non-use of RCs. Those who are more out-going may issue RCs more readily: those who are more willing to risk negative evaluation of themselves by others are more likely to use RCs.
- (2) Hatch (1978) hints that RC exchanges are mainly utilised for sorting out communication breakdown and do not directly lead to language learning. This view appears to be supported by our research: only a few foreign speakers remembered new words which they had learned from the interviews. However, there were some learners such as F102, F103, F206, F303 and F404, who tended to issue RCs even when they could have easily avoided them, and for these learners RCs appear to be a tool not only for solving comprehension problems but also for learning new words and expressions. It is therefore reasonable to argue that those who are more inclined to regard conversations with native speakers as opportunities for language learning are more likely to use RCs.
- (3) The language of RC avoiders is more likely to be fossilised at an earlier stage of language learning. Learners who are easily satisfied with partial (or non-) understanding of an utterance based primarily on guesswork will not carefully monitor the input and will lose opportunities to improve their interlanguage competence.

7.4 Summary

This chapter has been concerned with foreign speakers' RC avoidance. We have presented a typology of RC avoidance strategies and established foreign speakers use the strategies at least as frequently as they use RCs.

We cannot say without qualification whether RC avoidance is good or bad. However, it is pedagogically important to teach proper and effective ways of using the avoidance strategies. In this connection, the following four points should be mentioned.

(1) **Aizuchi.** As already seen, *aizuchi* are often used by foreign speakers to conceal comprehension problems. However, many foreign speakers have a poor repertoire of *aizuchi* expressions, and tend to mix English and Japanese. Even advanced speakers utter *u-n* as feedback; this may sound like English, or at best as too casual in formal interview situations. Clearly attention and guidance are needed in this area.

Besides being used as a means of RC avoidance, *aizuchi* are also indispensable in creating rapport, and the withholding of *aizuchi* may be interpreted as a sign of a comprehension problem. Thus, foreign speakers of Japanese should be made aware of their functions and taught various forms of *aizuchi* at an early stage of learning.

(2) **Pause-fillers.** Pause-fillers are normally used to signal a production problem. This function can be utilised to cover up a comprehension problem. Here again, the foreign speakers in our data have acquired a limited number of expressions to be used for such purposes. Many of them use *u-n*, *a-* or *ano-*. They should be taught how to fill a pause in Japanese.

(3) **Topic change.** Topic change is another way to avoid an RC. Foreign speakers at lower levels often nominate a new topic when acting as an interviewer, but they tend to rely on pause in this situation and make little use of linguistic boundary markers such as *tokorode* 'by the way', *hanashi wa kawarimasu ga* 'the topic is going to change', etc. Techniques for introducing a new topic are a further item which needs to be incorporated into the language teaching syllabus.

Needless to say, no one can change a topic without having any. Thus, foreign language learners should also accumulate topics which they can talk about. In this regard vocabulary is of particular importance. Structural syllabuses which give priority to syntactic rules of sentence patterns are inadequate in this regard. Topical syllabuses coupled with vocabulary building exercises need to be much more emphasised.

(4) **Topic development.** People who are cheerful and friendly in their native language may become sullen and taciturn in a foreign language. This is mainly due to frequent production and comprehension problems caused by insufficient grammatical competence. It is not a simple matter for lower level learners to develop a topic while coping with communication problems. However, teaching emphasis, and practice in class are relevant here. Foreign speakers who are trained to regard language learning as a process of acquiring a new system of grammar may become overconscious of grammatical accuracy and find it difficult to make a contribution to topic development. On the other hand, those who are encouraged to communicate rather than to produce correct sentences are more likely to be able to develop a topic by hooking on to what they have understood while ignoring unintelligible parts.

Comprehension problems are inevitable, but RCs are avoidable. In fact, foreign speakers learn how to avoid RCs by themselves. We do not know how the use of avoidance strategies affect language learning and the development of communicative competence in general. Further empirical studies are needed in this regard.

NOTES

1. Our data is derived from 'interviews', but the interviews are very different from those conducted by newspaper reporters or would-be employers: the participants knew that they were expected to continue talking for some time and that information exchanged during the sessions would not seriously affect their real lives. These features of the interviews give them much in common with the casual interactional conversation of everyday life, even though the roles of interviewer and interviewee were assigned beforehand. For this reason we have used the term 'quasi-interview' to characterise our data in Chapter 2. The nature of our data thus allows the participants to use RC avoidance strategies easily, and we have ample evidence for such avoidance.
2. Occasionally we face difficulties in extracting a paragraph in analysing real data. Let us examine the following excerpt:
 1. FS: (a long pause) *a- nihon de nihon no yasunda toki a- nani o taitei- shimasu ká*
What did you use to do when you were free in Japan?
 2. NS: *e-to nihon de yasumi no toki wa kaimono ni ittari sorekara eiga o mitari sorekara gōronē shite hon o yondari- shite mashitā* (laugh)
Well, when I had free time in Japan, I used to go shopping, watch films, read books while lying on the floor and so forth. (laugh)
 3. FS: *.... u-n eigo no hon o a- yomimasu ká*
Do you read English books?
 4. NS: *eigo no hōn desu ka a- hai toki ni yomimasu [a-] hai ano- amari yomitakunai desu* [(laugh)]
English books? Well, yes, sometimes. I don't want to really though. (laugh)
 5. FS: *a- a- kookoo de [hai] eigo o benkyoo shite ima(su) imashita ká*
Did you study English at high school?
 6. NS: *è benkyoo shite mashitā [a- (so)] ano hisshuu desu*
Yes, I did. It is compulsory.
 - 7.1 FS: *ā- soò*
Oh, really.
 - 7.2 (a long pause) *daigaku ni ikimashita ká*
..... Did you go to a university?
 8. NS: *eè iki ! mashita*
Yes, I did.
 9. FS: *! eigō-*
Engli..

10. NS: ..eè | *benkyoo shimashità*
Yes, I studies English.
11. FS: | *eigo benkyoo shimashità*
Did you study English?
12. NS: *hai*
Yes, I did.
13. FS: *soò hai soo desù*
Oh, I see.

(F107-N5:87)

If we regard pause and pause-fillers as the primary boundary markers, then this fragment can be divided into three sections: (1) – (2), (3) – (7.1) and (7.2) – (13). However, it is clear that this segmentation fails to observe the semantic tie between (2) and (3), and between (5) and (9). The following diagram presents the gist of the utterances and their relationships:

-
- 1 Q: **leisure** in Japan
- 2 A: shopping, movies, **reading**
- 3 PAUSE
- Q: **reading English books**
- 4 A:
- 5 Q: **studying English at highschool**
- 6 A:
- 7.1 PAUSE
- 7.2 Q: **entering university**
- 8 A:
- 9 Q: **studying English at university**
- 10 A:
- 11 Q: repeating (9)
- 12 A: repeating (10)
- 13 FEEDBACK and transition to a next topic

This fragment strongly supports Brown and Yule's (1983a) argument that speakers, and not conversation or discourse, have topics. In (1) the FS introduces a new topic 'the NS's leisure activities in Japan', but upon hearing the answer from the NS, she takes up one subject out of the three, i.e. 'reading'. Subsequently, she appears to be interested in the English training the

NS received in Japan and asks whether the NS studied English at high school and university. It is fairly certain that the FS is 'interviewing topically' even though she shifts from one subject matter to another.

It is impossible to give a title which uniquely describes the topic of this fragment: hobbies, English language study, education, etc. all seem equally feasible. Nonetheless we regard this fragment as a paragraph although, unlike example (2), it does not have a single topic. We argue that within a paragraph the focus of attention may shift, but there are observable ties between utterances.

Chapter 8

CONCLUSION

When we engage in conversation, we activate our knowledge of the rules of language and language use. We also employ '**communication strategies**' to attain effectively the goal of interaction as well as to solve communication problems of various kinds. Strategies of this latter type are termed **correction strategies** in this study. This term is derived from the work of Neustupný (1973, 1978a, 1981, 1985), who argues that communicative competence includes both generative and corrective competence.

Contact situations where people from different cultures meet are becoming ever more frequent, and an enormous number of people who are learning a foreign language wish to acquire the ability to converse with native speakers of the target language. However, the mastery of a language requires long years of conscious study and exposure, and most learners cease to learn the target language before they reach a level of proficiency comparable to that of native or near-native speakers. Thus, in conversation in contact situations, communication breakdown frequently occurs simply because of the gap between the participants' communicative competence in the language, and in such situations correction strategies obviously have a more important role to play than in native-native conversation.

Thus, in our 10 hours of conversational data derived from contact situations, the foreign speakers issued a request for clarification (RC) once every three minutes. The frequency of actual comprehension problems is of course even higher, since non-verbal signs of comprehension problems and the phenomenon of RC avoidance must also be taken into account. The major cause of these RCs appeared to be insufficient knowledge of vocabulary on the part of the foreign speakers – a problem that is certainly not the primary source of communication breakdown in adult native-native conversation.

Despite the frequent occurrence of communication breakdown in contact situations, proper attention has not been paid to this fact in applied linguistics. Many researchers in the field have concentrated on describing learner language or 'interlanguage' by means of error analysis. Only recently have discourse and interaction in native-foreign conversations begun to attract more attention. The study of interlanguage systems is certainly an important area of research, but the study of interlanguage communication is equally important because most learners of a foreign language wish to converse with native speakers, and conversation in contact situations will provide opportunities for learning. Thus, we need to know much more about what actually happens when an interlanguage is being used as a means of cross-cultural communication, and the theory of correction is an invaluable guide to research into this area of study.

Native and foreign speakers in contact situations are required to cooperate in maintaining conversation by using correction strategies to prevent or sort out communication disorders. The study of foreigner talk has thrown light on this issue from the native speakers' point of view: it is now an established fact that native speakers utilise correction strategies which are not normally required in native-native conversations. Some researchers, on the other hand, have attempted to analyse the correction strategies used by foreign speakers. Almost all of these studies, however, are concerned primarily with strategies for solving production problems, and empirical studies of correction strategies for comprehension problems have been limited in number and scale. The present study has been an attempt to fill this gap. In this concluding chapter we shall first summarise our major findings, and then discuss their implications for foreign language teaching.

8.1 Summary of major findings

In our data from 55 cases of quasi-interview discourse of approximately 10 hours of total duration, we have identified 183 overt requests for clarification (RCs) expressed by foreign speakers of Japanese. These RCs are caused by hearing or understanding problems, and they are requests for confirmation, repetition, or explanation. Thus, RCs were classified initially into four types: (1) hearing checks, (2) repetition requests, (3) understanding checks and (4) explanation requests. However, since more than half of the RCs were ambiguous in their intention, two additional, bifacial, RC types were distinguished: (5) hearing check/explanation requests and (6) repetition/explanation requests. RCs were also classified in terms of form:

- (1) Verb-type, containing a verb as main predicator.
- (2) Polite copula-type, ending in *desu ka*.
- (3) Plain copula-type, containing the plain copula *da* or zero-copula.
- (4) Incomplete type, with no main predicator.
- (5) Interjection type, such as *un?*, *e?*, *ha?* etc.

Apart from these two major criteria, RCs were also classified as either echo/non-echo and global/specific.

Additionally, a survey of RCs in native-native conversations was conducted in the belief that a better understanding of contact situations would be gained if they were compared with native situations in this respect. We found that in formal native conversations, among other things:

- (1) the understanding check was the most frequent request type;
- (2) the polite copula-type RC was significantly more frequent than any other RC form;
- (3) the verb-type RC was not used at all; and
- (4) the global RC was realised by interjections.

We argued that these and other findings appear to support the face-threatening hierarchy of RCs hypothesised on the basis of the politeness theory proposed by Brown and Levinson (1979).

Some of our major findings concerning foreign speakers' RCs are summarised below:

- (1) The understanding check was the most frequent type at the most advanced level (IV) while it was the least frequent at the lowest level (I). This is not surprising since it clearly reflects the learners' competence in comprehending spoken Japanese.
- (2) More than half of the RCs issued at all levels were of the echo-type. We argued that this is a natural strategy for foreign speakers. However, there were clear differences among the different levels: at level IV more than 60 percent of echo-type RCs were followed by the politeness marker *desu ka*, whereas at level I only 4 percent were of the polite copula-type.
- (3) Consequently, the polite copula-type RC was significantly more frequent than any other RC form at level IV. In contrast, this RC form was the least frequent at level I.
- (4) The verb-type RC was confined to levels I and II, and advanced learners did not issue this RC type at all.
- (5) The frequency of the interjective RC at level IV was higher comparable to that of native speakers and it was higher than at level I.

On the basis of these findings and others, we concluded that RCs used by foreign speakers become more like those of native speakers as their proficiency in Japanese increases.

We also noted that the verb-type RC may be marked as foreign since it is seldom used in native-native conversations. We argued that foreign learners of Japanese may learn this unnatural RC form through directed teaching situations at an early stage of learning and later drop it as being unnatural.

Echoing is a natural form for RCs; this is evident from its very high frequency. However, some learners did not seem to be aware of the fact that a sharp rising intonation in zero-copula/echo RCs reduces the politeness level. In this regard the high frequency of the polite form of echo + *desu ka* at level IV is significant. Although level IV learners were in general able to control the politeness level of RCs by attaching *desu ka*, they may not have reached the stage where they can control the politeness of interjective RCs. No one in our corpus issued such interjections as *ha?* and *hai?* which are found in formal native-native conversations.

We are not in a position to draw any clear conclusions as to how the native speakers evaluated RCs issued by the foreign speakers, let alone what factors affect this evaluation. However, the follow-up interviews with native speakers suggested that many of them took unnatural utterances for granted in conversation with foreign speakers and did not evaluate them negatively. Nevertheless it is reasonable to assume that some RC forms may be marked as foreign or inappropriate by native speakers.

Native speakers infer RC intentions on the basis of RC forms, preceding discourse and their assessment of foreign speakers' linguistic competence. The native speakers in our data were in general successful in interpreting RC intentions correctly and selecting appropriate correction strategies. Nearly 80 percent of RCs were successful: they were not followed by another RC. Confirmation requests (hearing and understanding checks) were all successful, and repetition requests were also highly successful in eliciting a desired response from native speakers. In contrast, explanation requests were less successful than the other types. This is mainly because

the native speakers occasionally failed to explain the trouble source in such a way that the foreign speakers of lower proficiency level could understand. It was also noted that the success rate of global explanation requests (e.g. *wakarimasen* 'I don't understand') was markedly lower than that of specific explanation requests.

There is a tendency for native speakers to employ the strategy of explanation when they are uncertain of RC intentions. Thus, HC/explanation requests which echo or attempt to echo a difficult word elicited a lexical explanation much more frequently than any other correction type. However, echo-type repetition/explanation requests seldom elicited a lexical explanation; they were mainly answered by repetition and syntactic modification. Echoing basic words as a request for explanation is not very effective since it is prone to be interpreted as a sign of hearing problems.

We have found that native speakers are normally very cooperative in sorting out communication disorders; they do not seem to mind helping foreign speakers. Despite their willingness to assist, however, they occasionally face problems in correcting their own utterances so as to get the original message across, and employ correction avoidance strategies. This phenomenon needs to be studied in future.

A lack of comprehension is not always regarded by the listener as a problem; he may disregard it as not being crucial to the development of conversation. There are also cases in which considerations of politeness, inability to formulate proper RC forms and other reasons deter the listener from expressing a request for clarification. The foreign speakers in our data reported that they often did not issue RCs even when they were aware of their lack of comprehension during the interviews. The follow-up interviews indicated that the foreign speakers employed RC avoidance strategies rather extensively. Although we were unable to establish the frequency of RC avoidance, the follow-up interviews made it possible to identify the places in conversational discourse where the strategies were actually used, and based on that account we set up various types of RC avoidance strategies in relation to discourse development.

The frequency of RCs issued by individual foreign speakers and their location in discourse led us to conclude that some speakers are more inclined to issue RCs (RC users) while others tend to disregard comprehension problems (RC avoiders). Examination of a longer stretch of discourse between a native speaker and a lower level RC avoider revealed that the foreign speaker, despite a very limited knowledge of grammar and vocabulary, was able to succeed in creating a coherent discourse while avoiding RCs. It is certain that a good conversationalist is not necessarily someone who possesses a good knowledge of grammar and lexicon. Corrective competence also counts. We suggested that the use and non-use of RCs is partly determined by the listener's personality and the purpose of interaction, and argued that foreign speakers who regard contact situations as opportunities for learning will issue RCs relatively frequently even when they could easily avoid them, whereas RC avoiders are more likely to view conversations with native speakers as opportunities for communication rather than learning.

This study of correction strategies has established that foreign speakers of Japanese make extensive use of various strategies for coping with communication breakdowns caused by comprehension problems, and that the strategies of RC and RC avoidance appear to be largely successful. However a number of questions concerning correction strategies in contact situations

remain unanswered and further research needs to be conducted before we are able to reach any clear conclusions on this important aspect of communicative competence. Questions to which this study did not address itself include:

- (1) How do foreign language learners learn correction strategies for coping with production and comprehension problems? To what extent do they transfer strategies from native language communication to contact situations?
- (2) How do native speakers of the target language evaluate various correction strategies? What factors are involved in this evaluation? What are effective strategies for smooth conversation?
- (3) In what way are correction strategies related to language learning? Do they promote language learning and acquisition, or do they merely serve to sort out communication disorders?

All these issues are crucial in gaining insight into communication in contact situations and foreign language learning in indirect learning situations.

The present study is by no means conclusive; in many respects it has posed questions rather than solving them. Despite its limited scope, however, we believe that it has made a contribution to the development of research into correction strategies in foreign language communication.

8.2 Correction and language teaching/learning

We have already suggested that the scope of foreign language teaching should be expanded to include correction strategies (and for that matter communication strategies) (cf. H. Brown 1980; Neustupný 1981, 1982; Canale 1983; Tarone 1983; Tanaka 1984). This argument is compatible with the new paradigm in foreign language teaching known as 'communicative language teaching' or the 'communicative approach' which emerged in the 1970s (cf. Van Ek 1975; Wilkins 1976; Widdowson 1978; Munby 1978; Brumfit and Johnson (eds.) 1979; Littlewood 1981; Johnson 1982; Hughes 1983; Yalden 1983). The proponents of this paradigm take the view that language is primarily a means of communication and advocate that the goal of foreign language teaching is to develop communicative competence (Hymes 1972; see also Halliday 1973) in the learner. This view of language necessarily leads us to look at three dimensions of language:

- (1) Language as a system of sounds, grammar, and lexicon.
- (2) Language as a vehicle for expressing communicative functions such as requests, commands, promises, apologies, etc. (Austin 1962; Searle 1976; Wilkins 1976)
- (3) Language as a tool for interaction to establish and maintain human relationships.

Dimension (1) is relatively easy to teach, at least to lower level learners, because a vast store of knowledge of language structure (phonology, morphology, syntax and lexicon) enables us to select, grade and explain a large selection of items. In particular, the audio-lingual method developed a rich variety of exercises, drills, and formal classroom procedures for teaching grammar patterns. Dimension (2) is the focal point in communicative language teaching. Courses and textbooks in this approach are often structured around communicative functions as the unit of teaching, and a number of classroom activities and exercises have been developed (Joiner and

Westphal (eds) 1978; Candlin 1981; Johnson and Morrow (eds) 1981; Littlewood 1981). However, teaching procedures in communicative language teaching is less rigid than in the case of the audio-lingual method; a wider variation in teaching methodology is permitted, and emphasis is placed on learning rather than teaching (cf. Richards and Rodgers 1986). Dimension (3) has recently attracted attention in foreign language teaching due to developments in sociolinguistics and ethnomethodology. Researchers in these disciplines have made a valuable contribution to our understanding of the relationship between language and society, and between language and the individual. However, knowledge of these aspects of language is still not rich enough to enable us to present the socio-cultural rules of the target language community in an explicit and systematic way. And clearly, it will be very difficult to develop skills in the learner to use a foreign language for interactional purposes in a traditional classroom setting.

Let us take a concrete example from Japanese. Japanese is noted for its elaborate system of honorifics. The learner of Japanese is required to learn the system if he wishes to use the language for interpersonal communication (Minami and Hayashi (eds) 1973; Harada 1976; Neustupný 1977, 1979b). In the traditional grammar-oriented approach, the teacher explains the system and drills various forms at different levels of politeness, so that the learner will at some stage be able to produce sentences having the same propositional meaning with different degree of politeness. Thus, for example, the learner understands that the following sentences are used to ask someone to write, and that they are arranged in order of increasing politeness:

- | | |
|--|------------------------------|
| (1) <i>Kaite.</i> | Please write |
| (2) <i>Kaite kudasai.</i> | Will you please write? |
| (3) <i>Kaite kudasaimasen ka.</i> | Would you please write? |
| (4) <i>Kaite itadakemasen deshoo ka.</i> | I wonder if you could write? |

Teachers who are concerned with communicative functions may explain that (1) and (2) can be used as commands, whereas (3) and (4) are used only as requests and entreaties (Ohso 1983).

If the teaching of Japanese honorifics stops at this stage, we cannot expect the learner to use Japanese honorifics appropriately in various communicative situations because he is not taught when, to whom, and in what contexts he is expected to use which form. The level of politeness is a matter of negotiation between the speakers; the participants manoeuvre to set a level of politeness satisfactory to both of them, and the level may shift up and down within a single conversation (Ikuta 1983). Communicative situations, as a matter of course, affect the use of honorifics. Company employees who normally use the plain style speech to each other may switch to a more polite style at a business meeting with a senior member of the firm.

The term 'language teaching' is often taken to mean the process of identification of inadequacy, selection of items to be taught, grading, presentation, explanation, drilling, and evaluation. If we accept this definition, can we 'teach' the use of Japanese honorifics or, in more general terms, the socio-cultural rules of language use? We cannot 'teach' what we do not know consciously. Thus the meaning of teaching and the role of language teachers must be re-examined.

In fact, the view of the role of the language teacher underwent a change during the 1970's. As can be clearly seen from a number of publications in applied linguistics during this period, there was a prominent shift of emphasis away from teaching towards learning under the influence of the Chomskyan view of language and language acquisition (Newmark 1966; Chastain 1969, 1976; Lester 1970; Jakobovits 1970; Corder 1975). This change was motivated by the psychological view of language learning, and did not bring any recognisable change in teaching content.

A shift of emphasis from teachers to learners is also evident in communicative language teaching. 'To learn it, do it' is one principle of this approach (Morrow 1981:63), which stems from the belief that communicative competence can best be acquired when the learner is provided with opportunities to use the target language for genuine communicative purposes. Corder (1977: 13) notes:

'Good' or 'appropriate' teaching is, therefore, perhaps no longer to be seen as imposing a highly organized and detailed syllabus upon a group of learners and as a process of **putting in or handing out** information, but as the task of responding to the developing functional or talking needs of the learner by making the appropriate data for learners available 'on request'.

In our view this principle of 'learning by doing' is an inevitable consequence given that we wish to teach what we are unable to present and explain in a systematic fashion. The term 'teaching' is now taken to mean 'helping to acquire'.

In teaching conversation under this approach the teacher often has the learner listen to a model dialogue as a comprehension exercise. The dialogue may be about a certain conversational topic (e.g. food, family, hobbies, etc.), and/or it may be centered around a certain communicative function (e.g. requests, apologies, complaints, etc.). The teacher attracts the learner's attention to the characteristic features of conversational discourse (Mio 1958; Oishi 1971; Allen and Guy 1974; Brown 1978; Kokuritsu Kokugo Kenkyūjo 1980, 1982; Richards 1980; Richards and Schmidt (eds) 1983; Mizutani (ed.) 1983). He may then instruct his students to memorise it. Up to this stage communication between the teacher and the learner is aimed at language teaching/learning. At a later stage the learner is encouraged to cooperate with other learners to produce a short dialogue similar to the model. The learners will discuss in the target language what sort of conversation they will construct. This conversation between the learners is genuine communication; they use the language to attain a common goal. In order to create communicative situations where the learner can interact with native speakers, the teacher may invite a native speaker to class, or he may send the learner to a place where the target language is used for communication. For instance, the learner of Japanese may be assigned to conduct interviews with Japanese employees at a Japanese restaurant to investigate their working conditions. In these contact situations the learner engages in conversation with a certain task in mind. In such situations communication overrides learning.

When the learner is thrown into a real communicative situation where he is required to cooperate with the native speaker to produce a coherent conversation with limited knowledge of grammar and vocabulary, he will, as seen in our data, inevitably face frequent communication problems. The learner is encouraged to use the language for communication so as to learn it, but

at the same time he needs to learn it so as to engage in communication with native speakers. The concept of corrective competence and correction strategies can help break this circle. The learner who is equipped with correction strategies will be better able to cope with communication breakdown and thus be able to maintain communication which, it is hoped, will in turn enhance acquisition of communicative competence.

We do not wish to give the impression that we reject traditional grammar-oriented language teaching. There are a number of important things which can and should be taught in a traditional teacher-centred classroom. Our argument is merely that corrective competence is part of communicative competence and correction strategies should be given a proper place in communicative language teaching. The teacher should direct learners' attention to the inevitable problems in communication, particularly in conversation, and inform them about correction strategies as an important tool for coping with communication disorders.

8.3 Suggestions for teaching correction strategies

As a corollary to the preceding argument, some suggestions for teaching correction strategies, particularly those used for solving comprehension problems, will be in order.

Most model dialogues contained in Japanese language textbooks do not take into account the situational aspects of conversation: they often fail to specify who is talking to whom, when, where and why. They are unnatural imitations of native-native conversation. They are also unnatural as examples of conversations in contact situations. They fail to reflect the characteristics of contact conversation: the participants talk without any communication problems. These model dialogues are designed to present linguistic contexts in which particular grammar patterns are placed. Thus, they are far from ideal for foreign learners of Japanese to learn conversation.

Learners need to learn the following RC expressions and their politeness levels:

Hearing checks

1. Echo (+ *desu ka*) *Midori?*
 Midori desu ka
 Did you say *midori*?

Understanding checks

2. XY (+ *desu ka*) *Midori?*
 Midori desu ka
 (Do) you mean *midori*?
3. PQ tte XY *desu ka* *Green tte midori desu ka*
 Does 'green' mean *midori*?

Repetition requests

Global type

4. Formula *Sumimasen*
 Sorry, I beg your pardon?
5. Interjections *Un?, e?, ha?, etc.*
 What?, Pardon?

Specific type

6. Wh (+ *desu ka*)
- NS: *raishuu ikimasu* I'll go next week
 FS: *itsu (desu ka)* When?
7. Echo + wh (+ *desu ka*)
- NS: *midori ga ooi desu ne* There is a lot of greenery
 FS: *midori ga nani (nan desu ka)?* Greenery what?

Explanation requests

Global type

8. Formula *Sumimasen*
 Sorry
 Chotto wakaranai n desu ga
 I don't quite understand

Specific type

9. Echo *Midori?*
 What's *midori*?
10. Echo + XY *Midori tte?*
 Midori tte nani?
 Midori tte nan desu ka
 Midori to iu no wa ...
 Midori to iimasu to ...
 What do you mean by *midori* ?

Teachers and textbook writers will include these RC expressions in model dialogues to draw learners' attention to them.

A model dialogue for teaching RCs

- NS: *Meruborun wa midori ga ookute ii desu nê*
It's nice that Melbourne has lots of greenery
- FS: *Sumimasen. Chotto wakaranai n desu gā ...* [RC: Repetition/explanation request]
Sorry, but I don't quite understand
- NS: *Meruborun wā?* [CU: Repetition]
Melbourne?
- FS: *Haì* [Acknowledgement]
Yes
- NS: *Midori gā?* [CU: Repetition]
Greenery?
- FS: *Mirorī?* [RC: Hearing check]
Did you say *mirorī*?
- NS: *Midorì* [CU: Repetition]
I said *midorì*?
- FS: *Midori desu kâ?* [RC: Hearing check]
Did you say *midori*?
- NS: *Haì. Ki toka kusa 'grass' desù.* [CU: Confirmation + explanation]
Right. It refers to 'trees', 'grass' and the like
- FS: *Aà, haì.* [Acknowledgement]
Oh, I see
- NS: *Nê. Midori ga ooi desu nê.* [CU: Repetition]
Right? There is lots of greenery, isn't there?
- FS: *Midori ga nân desu ká.* [RC: Repetition request]
Greenery what?
- NS: *Ooi desù.* [CU: Repetition]
(There is) much
- FS: *Aà, haì, wakarimashità.* [Acknowledgement]
Oh, I see. Now I understand
- Tookyoo wa ikaga desu ká.* [Topic development]
How about Tokyo?

A dialogue like this is most unlikely to occur in native-native conversation, but it is a realistic reflection of contact conversations. Learners need to be exposed to learn RC expressions through dialogues of this kind. At an early stage of teaching the teacher should encourage his students to use these expressions in class whenever they have difficulty in understanding what is said to them

by the teacher or their classmates. Teachers also need to reexamine their own language. The so-called 'teacher talk' (a variety of foreigner talk; cf. Henzl 1979) is necessary and even commendable, but there are some expressions which need to be avoided in classroom. *Moo ichido* 'Say that again please' is an example. As we have noted, this RC expression is widely used by beginning learners, but it is seldom used by native speakers of Japanese, and it is certain that learners pick it up from their textbooks or teachers. The teacher can easily avoid this frequently used classroom expression by means of a nonverbal cue.

Exercises should be devised for drilling RC expressions:

(1) Echoing drill

Teacher: *Oosutoraria wa josei no chii ga takai desu nè.*
Female social status is high in Australia

Student: *Joosē... ?*
(Students try to echo a word they have heard.)

Teacher: *Josei.*

Student: *Josei. Josei tte nan desu ká.*
Josei . What does it mean?

Teacher: *Women desù.*
It means 'women'

Student: *Aà, hai.*

(2) Specification drill

a. Native speaker: *Watashi wa XXXXXX ikimashità.*
I went XXXXXX

Student: _____ *irasshaimashita ká.*
You went _____ ?

b. Native speaker: *Watashi wa niku ga XXXXXX.*
I XXXXXX meat

Student: *Niku ga* _____ ?

In this exercise students fill the blanks (_____) with appropriate forms.

One may argue against teaching RCs in class on the grounds that (1) there are many things to be taught and no time can be allocated for teaching RCs, (2) comprehension problems will become less as the learner improves his lexico-grammatical competence, and (3) RC expressions are in any case automatically mastered as they engage in conversations with native speakers. We have already argued with regard to (1) that it does not take much time to present and drill the closed set of RC expressions, and in our experience learners show interest in them. As regards (2) and (3), it takes many years before learners become able to carry on conversations relatively free from

comprehension problems, and even advanced learners in our data occasionally make mistakes in formulating correct and appropriate RCs. If we are to help learners to acquire communicative competence, teaching RCs is a sensible decision.

In this teaching, the importance of *aizuchi* 'feedback' cannot be underestimated. Native speakers in contact situations are often unable to see whether their intended message has been understood. Learners of Japanese need to learn how and when they should issue feedback, and to realise that a lack of feedback may be interpreted as a sign of comprehension problems or of indifference to what is being said. Furthermore, learners who are sensitive to feedback are also better able to issue an RC while the other speaker is holding a turn. In other words, they can respond to an RC invitation properly. Teachers of Japanese need to develop techniques to teach *aizuchi*.

Hatch (1978: 434) suggests that 'the learner needs to be able to talk about a small number of topics that s/he knows s/he will be asked ... They should practice nominating topics about which they are prepared to speak. They should do lots of listening comprehension for topic nominations of lots of native speakers'. The learner indeed needs to learn how to change, nominate and develop a topic to produce a lively conversation. Foreign learners tend to be passive in conversation even though they are active participants in their native language. This is partly due to their lack of lexico-grammatical competence, and partly because they have nothing to say about the topic. However, it is also due to the language learning environment: the teacher does most of the talking and the learner is allowed to sit and be quiet, giving a minimum response. The learner should be encouraged to comment and ask questions even when the topic is not very interesting. This ability to nominate and develop a topic is also utilised when he wishes to avoid an RC.

Finally, it is clear from our data that RCs directed to lexical items are the most frequent: global type RCs are much less common. This does not mean that learners do not face syntactic problems; rather it seems to indicate that they are able to guess what is said once they understand some key words in the utterance. Hatch (ibid.:430) notes that 'it seems quite clear that vocabulary is an important concern of second language learners'. Teaching vocabulary needs to be emphasised much more in foreign language teaching in order to reduce the number of RCs.

It is only recently that communication strategies have attracted attention in applied linguistics. Before we can develop effective techniques for teaching communication strategies, empirical research is necessary to discover how native and non-native speakers interact in contact situations, and in what way this interaction differs from native-native interaction. The application of the present study to language teaching pedagogy is beyond its scope; nonetheless we believe that it has clearly indicated the importance of communication strategies in foreign language teaching.

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